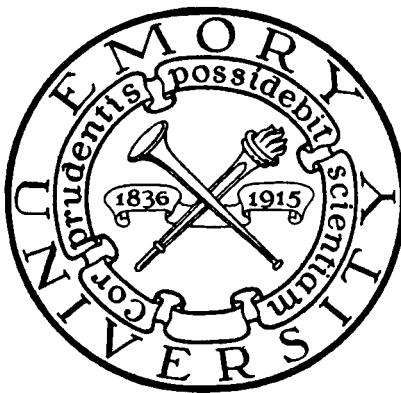


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THE CLINTONS;

OR,

DEEPS AND SHALLOWS OF LIFE.

“ Oh we will walk this world
Yoked in all exercise of noble end,
And so thro’ those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows.”

TENNYSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE CLINTONS.

CHAPTER I.

Yet sometimes, when the secret cup
Of still and serious thoughts went round,
He seemed as if he drank it up,
He felt with spirit so profound.

WORDSWORTH.

THAT evening Alice sat long and dreamily over the fire in her little dressing-room—a favourite retreat of hers, which opened into the larger room where she slept, with the little Desmonds, whose cribs stood on either side of her bed. She sat pondering over her new friend, their father, thinking over his character,

his words, and the gleams of thought they often revealed. I call him her new friend, but she felt nothing of novelty or excitement as she quietly thought him over, her eyes fixed on the glowing embers, and an almost tender smile stealing like moonlight over her features, as she recalled his truthful countenance, his earnest manner, and his sincere and eager following of the good which he could recognise as such—his mind striving, like a plant, to grow towards the light, and hold up its flowers to the sun—even, Alice thought, as she herself was striving after truth, not darkly or in blind effort, but straight on, in the light, and towards its source.

Suddenly her reflections were interrupted by a sound from the adjoining room—a low wailing as of a child in pain. Alice ran instinctively to the bed-side of Kate, and held the light over, looking anxiously in the child's face. Alice turned pale with fear when she saw the usually colourless features burning with the hue of fever, and the once soft, spiritual

eyes glowing like coals of fire, and dilated to an unearthly glare. She took the child in her arms, but started at the contact with its burning skin.

“Kate—dear little Kate!” she said, “are you ill?”

“It’s so hot!” murmured the child. “Oh, my head! The candle hurts my head.”

Alice saw that the child was in a fever. She rang for the Swiss maid, laying Kate in her own cool bed. Louise came with the terrified, hasty step of one suddenly awoke. She was more experienced than Alice, but her presence of mind failed her when she saw the alarming state of her little charge, and thought of the child’s always delicate health. She took the sufferer in her arms; not to relieve, but to cry over it.

“Don’t, Louise,” said Alice, quietly; “you will frighten her. You know what is best to be done. Take care of her till I come back. I am going to carry Lina to your bed, and call Mr. Desmond.”

The sense of responsibility roused Louise to thought and action, while Alice, carrying the half-sleeping Lina, went through the visible darkness of the corridor to Louise's room, whence, leaving her burden, she returned with slower footsteps, thinking where she should find Desmond. She knew the gentlemen had not come up-stairs, for her dressing-room opened upon the staircase, and she would have heard them as she sat. Fortunately, she had not yet undressed, so she was free to follow her impulse, and proceed to the drawing-room in search of Mr. Desmond. No one was there, the lights were out, and the room evidently left for the night. They must have gone to the billiard-room. Alice knew nothing of its locality, but bravely traversed the hall, and proceeded, almost in darkness, along a gallery leading to the east wing, where she suddenly came upon the three gentlemen on their way to their rooms.

They started at the apparition.

“Miss Clinton!” cried Desmond, the first to recognise her.

“Is the house on fire?” asked Lord Rossendale.

“I was looking for you, Mr. Desmond,” said Alice. “I do not think Kate is well. Will you come up and see her?”

Desmond turned pale, not from Alice’s words, but there was something in her countenance that struck him with fear.

“I will go with you,” said Wilfred. “I have some experience.”

Desmond hurried on without a word. Wilfred kept beside him. Alice lingered a moment.

“Will you send some one for the doctor?” she whispered to her brother-in-law.

“At this time of night, Alice! Will it not do in the morning? What is the matter?”

“Fever,” she replied. “Do send, Henry—there is danger, I assure you.”

“Very well—of course, if it is necessary. But this is a severe night, and the servants are in bed.”

“ Oh, Henry ! think of poor Mr. Desmond,” pleaded Alice.

And Lord Rossendale turned back and went to the yard.

“ Take Watercress, and make haste,” he said to the sleepy stable-boy.

“ Your lordship’s best hack,” growled the head groom, “ that your lordship was to ride fourteen miles to cover to-morrow, and that I never lets no boys on out of my sight !”

“ Send him on Watercress !” was all Lord Rossendale’s reply.

And he strode away.

The weary night stole on, and the chill dawn, and the pitiless winter morning, and still the child tossed restlessly about, or moaned as it lay, exhausted with increasing pain. The Swiss nurse tried every remedy she knew of, but all failed. Wilfred could suggest nothing more. All the experience he had gained among the poor availed but to raise hopes and overthrow them in this instance.

As the fever rose, the child no longer recognised those about her, and several times she called plaintively for her father, and turned from him as from a stranger when he came. He could not bear it; unused as he was to illness and its fearful incidents, the circumstance terrified him, and cut into his heart, filled as it was with almost a woman's love for his frail child. He turned from the room, and strayed into Alice's unoccupied apartment, where he stood leaning upon the chimney-piece, his face concealed in his hands.

His child!—his loving, thoughtful, gentle little child! Oh no, she could not die—not *that* one! He could not give up his little Kate—his fair-haired darling—his household angel! And he wrung his hands, and murmured that she could not—should not leave him.

A hand rested heavily, but tenderly on his shoulder, and Wilfred stood beside him.

“Take courage,” he said; “there is less cause for fear than you suppose. All may be

well, Desmond—all *will* be well, if you but trust and submit.”

“Submit! Oh, Wilfred! you do not know what the trial is! I could bear anything but this. Not *her*—I cannot lose *her*!”

“She will not be lost,” said Wilfred; “not lost, but saved—assured to you hereafter, Desmond, if you will but follow her. But I think she will recover. I have seen so many such cases among the poor that have terminated favourably. You must hope, Desmond. In half-an-hour the doctor will be here.”

Desmond scarcely seemed to hear Wilfred’s words, but suddenly walked back towards the room he had left.

“Don’t,” said Wilfred, taking him by the arm; “it is wisest to keep the room clear, and she will not know you. Delirium is a very common symptom, but you must expect it to continue some time. Leave her to her nurse and Alice.”

That name had a calming influence, even then. He stood still, and in his heart blessed

her who tended his child—her to whom, in all its fear and woe, his spirit clung.

The doctor came, just between daybreak and sunrise. With a kindly smile, he glanced at Desmond's pale and anxious face, after he had examined his little patient.

“A sharp attack of fever. Nothing inflammatory—no fear of infection—only a childish fever—easily subdued at present. Delirium? Yes, yes, of course—very distressing to witness, but not alarming—quite usual, I assure you. Must be taken in time, though. When will she be well? Why, my good Sir, really, these things are tedious sometimes—mustn’t be over anxious. Call again this afternoon. Nurse will give the draughts—mind now, every two hours. Good-morning, Sir. Lord Rossendale not down yet, I suppose? Good-morning, Miss Clinton—better go to bed, and rest. Good-morning,” and the voluble doctor fidgeted out of the room, and betook himself to the coffee and broiled chicken prepared for him in the dining-room.

But he left hope and encouragement behind him. Desmond brightened up at his words, and Alice believed that she had yielded to needless alarm. She consented to take an hour's rest, the child being a little quieter. Exhausted by the night's watching, she did not awake till she was roused at ten o'clock by the entrance of Lilian, carrying a tray.

“I've brought you some breakfast, Alice,” she said, with her usual careless smile; “you must be knocked up, I should think. Oh, here's mamma!”

Alice was completely awake when Mrs. Clinton's heavy silks and rattling bracelets followed Lilian to her bed-side.

“How is she now? Where's Mr. Desmond?” she asked, starting up.

“Mr. Desmond is down-stairs at breakfast, of course,” said Mrs. Clinton, “and the child's asleep. Come, Alice, get up; I never saw such a foolish creature.”

Mrs. Clinton's “foolish creature” was not a

term of endearment as it is with some people

“Alice is tired, mamma,” said Lilian; “she was up all night, you know.”

Mrs. Clinton had not breakfasted; it was her peculiarly cross hour. The ebb of her temper always took place between nine and ten.

“Lilian, my dear,” she said, “you have not made tea, I think, and the three gentlemen are down-stairs; besides, I want to speak to Alice.”

Lilian vanished, with a half-frightened, half-amused glance at her prostrate sister, and went down, singing a Border melody.

“Mamma,” said poor Alice, as the door closed, “had I not better get up? and will you not go down to breakfast?”

Some remains of sleep must then have obfuscated Alice’s judgment, or she would not by the above speech have fired the train of Mrs. Clinton’s magazine of ill-temper. It exploded at once.

“I am very sorry indeed to find that I’m

in your way, Alice ; but, unfortunately, I have some sense of duty, and can wait for my breakfast until I have done what I ought to do."

She paused for a reply, but there was none.

" I am sure, Alice, I did not think you would walk about the house in the middle of the night to look for Mr. Desmond, nor that you would think it necessary to display to the whole household that you have taken upon yourself the double duties of governess and nurse to his children. Your want of common discretion, Alice, is really deplorable."

" But, mamma, Kate was so ill," Alice said " I thought at such a time nothing should be thought of, but what was best to be done for her and Mr. Desmond. You know, mamma, they are in a sad position, poor children!"

" Nonsense ! there are many children without mothers in the world ; and there have been fevers, before, I suppose, among orphans as well as others. Such nonsense ! couldn't you have

rung the bell, or sent the maid, or done something rational, instead of sitting up all night with two gentlemen, and staying in bed now, that every one may know how much trouble you took, and for whom you took it?"

Mrs. Clinton's tongue was running away with her. The reader may think that Alice ought to have been cut to the heart by these bitter and unjust remarks; but it was not so, for Alice was just-minded, though sensitive, and she knew how little meaning lay beneath her mother's hasty words. She knew that ill-temper is a short delirium, as anger is a short madness; and though it pained her to see her mother's weakness, she did not suffer for herself.

"I am sorry to have displeased you, mamma," was all she replied. "I did not think as much as I ought, I know, but I was frightened."

"Frightened! at a child catching a cold, or a feverish attack, or something—well, it's all the same. If you follow every impulse, Alice, as you have done in this instance, I do not know

where you will end," and Mrs. Clinton sighed impatiently at the thought of Alice's desperate career, and then, happily, she remembered breakfast.

"I am going down," she said. "I beg, Alice, you will get up at once, and come down."

And with a heavier step than usual, Mrs. Clinton left the room.

Little Kate was in a troubled sleep when Alice descended to breakfast. The prescribed remedies had been applied, and there was already a slight but evident improvement. Mr. Desmond met Alice's anxious glance, as she entered the room, with his usual cheerful look. Mrs. Clinton's good temper returned when she found that no one was going to be dismal ; and the threatened gloom being averted, she began to feel a little comfortable sympathy.

"Poor dear little Kate!" she said to Mr. Desmond, "really I quite felt for you last night. I can't say how glad I am she is better —most thankful, indeed."

How lightly people talk of thankfulness sometimes ! But Desmond was thankful, indeed, though not in many words.

Alice's bed-room was changed in consequence of Kate's illness. Louise appropriated Alice's former bed, and she and Lina occupied a not distant apartment. So Desmond was free to sit through the long morning hours beside his slumbering child reading, or seeming to read, while his thoughts wandered from Alice to the sleeper, and back again to Alice, who had now walked out with her cousin, in obedience to Mrs. Clinton's orders, thus expressed : " You are a perfect object, Alice ! Sitting up all night has made you look like a ghost ! Go out, child, and take Wilfred, if you like."

They strayed into the wood together, and walked under the chequered sunshine, which the now leafless trees admitted. They were sheltered from the wind, which blew cuttingly from the north ; and the physical sense of relief, after crossing the broad exposed lawn, made them comfortable enough to talk, which, I

think, the best of friends can seldom do out of doors on a real winter's day.

"Poor Desmond," said Wilfred, "how devoted he is to his children!"

"They are all he has in the world," said Alice, looking down; "he has almost no relations. But for them, he would be alone in the world."

"But with those two futures, humanly speaking, in his hands, life must be full of interest to him, and full of duty and hope."

"And fear," said Alice, "and responsibility. It is a heavy charge."

"It is," replied Wilfred; "he feels it as such, and is besides, I think, of a hopeful and courageous nature, one who will follow duty over the roughest and most perilous path. He is learning to look upward too, and see the sun that lights him on. I believe and trust that his will be great happiness at last."

"At last!" repeated Alice. "In the worst of sorrow, one may hope for happiness at last;

but Mr. Desmond is happy now, I should think, notwithstanding his cares."

"He is contented," said Wilfred, "and is not of an anxious or self-tormenting nature; but true happiness is a plant of slow growth—exotic, too, in this world, and requiring long cultivation and care. It does not grow in many hearts, though in all it may be planted."

Alice turned with surprise to Wilfred.

"That seems a gloomy view," she said, thinking that he spoke from the bitter experience of his own life.

"Gloomy!" replied Wilfred; "where is the gloom in believing that, under all circumstances, happiness is attainable?"

"But you call it an exotic," Alice said, "and a plant of slow growth, as if it were a thing to be learnt like patience and resignation. Why, Wilfred, happiness is spread over the whole earth; and look at the happiness of childhood."

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy," said Wilfred; "but when the 'shades of the prison-

house' have closed round us, there is no more real certain happiness, until, by the power of faith, heaven lies about us again."

Alice sighed.

"I know what you mean, Wilfred," she said. "I myself am only learning to be happy; but I thought it was something morbid in my own nature that had hitherto kept the daylight from me. I accuse myself of my past discontent, as of a sin."

"There is a sinful discontent," said Wilfred, "a fretful accusing of circumstances, a rebellious complaining of our post in the battle of life, a ceaseless wishing for gifts denied, and things or positions granted to others, but withheld from us. I think it is sinful discontent, even to mourn that we have not the good qualities, or the spiritual gifts that we see in others. But there is something like discontent, which is not sinful. It is the blind, restless longing of the heaven-touched spirit after all that is good and true; it is the Divine influx making itself felt in the depths of a soul where

evil harbours still, and struggling amid corruption—wakening the good within to battle, and raising fierce strife with evil. Truly at first the kingdom of heaven brings not peace, but a sword.

“ Peace follows,” said Alice.

“ Yes,” said Wilfred, “ an armed, defensive peace ; but still a perfect peace.”

And Alice looked at Wilfred, and read it on every feature of his countenance. They walked on in silence a little while—he, communing tranquilly with his own quiet spirit—she, pondering on his words, and applying them to her newly calmed nature, till the thought of Kate recurred to her, and of Kate’s father, from whom the conversation had arisen.

She would not prolong the walk, and they returned home together ; and without entering the drawing-room, they both went at once upstairs. Desmond met them at the door of his child’s room.

“ The fever is greatly lowered,” he said, “ and she is still asleep.”

“ That is good news,” said Wilfred. “ Will you come out and walk, Desmond, as she is so much better ?”

Alice had entered the room, and was bending over the child ; but she heard the proposition, and instantly said she would remain with Kate, and that he ought to go out.

He thanked her cordially, and followed Wilfred. He looked quite pale and exhausted, as strong men do, after even a short period of anxiety and confinement. Wilfred, who would not have suffered from such a cause, felt for him, and led him, not to the wood, but across the river to the open, breezy hill-side. Desmond revived as the cold blast beat upon him, and the elastic turf rose and sunk under his firm and rapid step ; and when they gained the summit of the hill, Wilfred forgot his own aching chest and beating pulses as he looked on his friend’s fresh, healthful colour and steady frame.

“ Why, Wilfred,” said Desmond, “ I have walked too fast for you. What a selfish fel-

low I am! I forgot your quiet habits, Wilfred."

"Never mind," he said, cheerfully; but as he spoke, he sunk, pale and gasping, on the turf. Desmond was beside him, on his knees, in an instant; but Wilfred rose, saying:

"It's nothing, Desmond, nothing to signify. Only walking up hill with the wind against me took away my breath. It's not like the London streets, you know. Come, let us go down the other side."

"Lean on me," said Desmond, anxiously; but Wilfred smilingly declined the assistance, and they walked down.

"How beautiful these gorses must be when in flower," observed Wilfred.

"Rossendale thinks them more beautiful now," Desmond replied. "They find a fox here sometimes, though it is not one of the covers; but the furze is beautiful in spring."

"The first time Linnæus saw a furzy hill-side like this," said Wilfred, "he knelt down on the turf and thanked God for the beauty

that lay before him. I do not wonder at it."

"It was a strange action, yet I can almost understand it. I fear, however, it never would have occurred to me. One never thinks of thankfulness except when some danger or sorrow is averted," and his thoughts reverted to his child, as Wilfred well knew.

Wilfred never shrunk from true personal intercourse with those he conversed with; the cowardice miscalled delicacy never made him forget his holy office, or leave unsaid a word of warning or comfort, where he thought either were needed. He had the art of always speaking to the point without giving pain.

"Desmond," he said, "I know what you are thinking of: you feel so thankful now, escaped from a threatening sorrow, that you can scarcely imagine the thankfulness of others, for what seems to you a lesser blessing; but we should be grateful for all things—grateful for the beauty of a wild flower—grateful, too, for

desolating affliction, when it comes. Our good, and the Divine love, are alike in all."

"Our good," repeated Desmond. "You mean that every little thing that happens is specially ordered by Providence, for us, individually. That is the doctrine in which I was brought up—the belief in a special Providence; but, Wilfred, I never could take in the idea; it seems to me such a low conception of the Divinity, to imagine His perpetual interference with circumstances; and it is not rational. For instance, suppose I arrange to go to Ireland next week, and afterwards put off my journey for a day, and suppose the vessel I was to have sailed in is lost with all her passengers, you would tell me that I had a providential escape."

"I would," said Wilfred; "but go on."

"Well, and what are the friends of all the drowned people to say? If what happened to me was providential, then their misfortune was not; Providence took care of me, and let them drown. Or, if they say their trial was a judg-

ment of Providence, why had I not the judgment, too?"

"Were such an event to happen," replied Wilfred, "I should consider it as entirely ordered by God in all respects. I should believe that for His good purposes towards you, towards those who perished, towards their friends—indeed, towards millions, perhaps, of His unborn and to us unknown creatures, those persons were drowned, and you kept from the peril; but you are not called upon to speculate. You should devote to God the earthly life He has prolonged, and the other sufferers should turn to Him in their distress. That will be their part and yours. Hundreds of other circumstances would arise from such an event, all fraught with destiny, and bringing about important consequences. Events are strung together, as it were, on a labyrinth of cords; but God holds the ends, and to Him all is one clear and perfect system, each detail as important as the whole—all by Him seen and surveyed at once, without past, present, and

future, without cause and effect. God is the cause ; the universe, the effect. Abstractedly there is no cause and effect.”

“ Yet a hole in the ship’s bottom is a cause, and its sinking an effect.”

“ Not strictly ; a thousand things may occur besides the ship’s sinking in consequence, or, as as you would say, ‘as the effect’ of the hole in the ship’s bottom. And again, why does a hole in the ship make it sink ? because the water comes in. Why does it come in ? because one of God’s laws is, that water finds its own level. So we come at the first and only cause.”

“ One of God’s laws ?” said Desmond, inquiringly. “ You have mentioned a common law of nature.”

“ And what is nature ?” said Wilfred. “ It is God’s truth made visible. Its laws are His laws—but this is another subject. We were talking of special Providence, as it is called. I can scarcely put my meaning into words, and it is hard, indeed, impossible, for man to realise the idea of Providence. ‘ We cannot by search-

ing find out God ;' but can we not conceive of infinite intelligence, to whom the universe is an eternal present, and nothing small or great to Him, whose being is beyond time and space ? can we not conceive, as I said before, that by Him all is fore-ordained, every creature fore-known, with all its wants and circumstances, and the whole plan of the universe so arranged that each has his place, his work, his events assigned him, specially and individually, though linked to all things in all time ? Could it be otherwise, in a world that sprung from the mind of infinite wisdom and infinite love ?"

" Your idea is a grand and vast one," said Desmond. " It makes the mind reel with wonder, as it were ; but it reconciles much that before was jarring to my mind. Then those are not wrong, who hold what I used to call the childish doctrine of special Providence ; they only believe without thinking it out—they take as much truth as they think concerns themselves, and leave the rest."

" Exactly," said Wilfred, " and they are

happy in their simple faith, if indeed they receive all the truth of which they are capable. If you call their belief childish, you must take care how you despise one of these little ones. The lambs are often nearest to the shepherd.”

Desmond thought silently for a moment or two, and then said :

“ I cannot turn my mind from what you have been saying about cause and effect ; it seems strange to say that the final or first cause is the only cause.”

“ Well,” replied Wilfred, “ I must concede something of the poverty of our language—of all language, indeed. Words may be the expression of thought, but they are sometimes its heaviest fetters. The word ‘cause,’ applied to mere links in the chain of circumstances, hinders our conception of that which is indeed the cause.”

“ But we must talk as others do in this world.”

“ We must, since on us rests the curse of

Babel, the confusion and degradation of language; but let us keep our ideas clear—let us distinguish the spirit from the letter, the truth from the word which darkens truth. To return to this word, *cause*. Imagine a man dragging a stone by a long chain of iron. You see the stone move, though the man may be out of sight, and you do not point to one of the links and say, ‘This causes the stone to move,’ but you say that its motion is caused by a man’s force. The angels (who, if we may hold, as I do, that angels watch the actions of men,) survey the same scene, deem that for that slight action, as for all others, there is no cause but God. The man’s will makes him move the stone, and God gives him the will, and by continual influx keeps up the life which was His gift at first. We may talk of causes as we will, but let us remember that we only mean some one link of the endless reticulated chains by which Providence governs the world.”

“Our thoughts should rise far beyond our words, I think,” said Desmond. “I doubt

whether mine ever did so before. There is another word, which I have been told a Christian should never use—‘chance.’”

“I do not like the word,” said Wilfred, “for it is a favourite one with those who refuse to see a governing intelligence in the events of life ; but there is something that may be called the law of chance—a divine law, like all others.”

“I see what you mean,” said Desmond. “I have thought of the subject before. There is a great deal of meaning in the common expression: ‘the chances are that such a thing will happen.’ If chance was the perfectly blind, eccentric, ruleless thing that people imagine, how could we reckon on it as we do ? The man who, during a sea-fight, put his head into the hole made by the last cannon-ball, saying that he knew another would never strike the same place, acted upon something like a principle or law.”

“Yes,” said Wilfred. “People laugh at that story, and yet it witnesses to a great truth.

The Disposer of events preserves a just balance of circumstances by not permitting the constant or too frequent recurrence of any one. The things that seem, on a limited view, entirely matters of chance (in the ordinary sense of the word), are, when we take a wider range of vision, plainly seen as ordered with a precision almost mathematical in its exactness, and ordered too, so as to produce invariable good. Thus chance becomes one of the strongest proofs of the existence of divine wisdom and divine love."

"Yes," said Desmond. "If the apparent confusion were, in fact, anything but the most perfect order, nature would long ago have perished in her own struggles."

"True," said Wilfred; "how could the universe, living, moving, and complicated as it is, with its endless changes and ever succeeding conditions, exist one moment by chance? There must be an intelligent ruler. Statistics, too, display something of the laws that preserve the balance in this complex creation; for

instance, you know no one can foretell or make the smallest conjecture as to the number of a future family, or the proportion of male to female children to be born in it. It seems completely a matter of chance, whether Mr. and Mrs. A. B. have sons, daughters, or both ; yet we know, that in the aggregate, the proportion of the sexes will be accurately preserved throughout the country. Nay more : statistics prove that when prolonged war has increased mortality among the males, there are more male than female children born ; Heaven compensating, as it were, for the evil man has caused."

"I have heard that before," said Desmond. "But I never doubted the existence of a Providence, in the sense of a continual, intelligent governor of this world and the universe. In short, I never doubted revelation at all—I fear I have not thought enough upon the subject, until lately, either to doubt, or earnestly believe."

Wilfred looked at his companion, whose eyes were bent upon the turf, on which his heavy

footstep fell with accelerated movement as he strode onwards, thinking silently.

“It is well to acknowledge,” said Wilfred, “that want of doubt does not constitute faith, it is well to confess that you have not thought much on the subject, not even enough for ‘honest doubt,’ in which as Tennyson says, ‘there lives more faith than in half the creeds.’ But such doubt is a mere phase—a dark and bitter passage in the life of the earnest truth-seeker. You and I ought to be thankful that we have been spared it.”

“I trust,” said Desmond, seriously, “that the time is near when my belief will turn to faith.”

“You see that it needs the change? You wish that it may indeed take place?”

“I do!” said Desmond, pausing in his rapid walk, “whatever be the cost, I do!”

CHAPTER II.

To us, this grave ; to her, the rows
The mystic palm-trees spring in ;
To us, the silence in the house ;
To her, the choral singing !

MRS. BROWNING.

Two or three days passed on, and still Desmond's secret was unspoken. He was not much alone with Alice, and when those rare moments came, he dared not breathe the words that might perhaps sever him from her, without whose regard he thought he could not live. Their sweet, cordial intercourse, their common interests, their frequent, earnest converse, gave, as Desmond felt, deep happiness to both ; but he did not dare to think he yet held

in Alice's heart the place he sought. He knew he was a friend to her ; he would not risk the treasure of her friendship for the uncertain hope of that far paradise, her love.

Meanwhile his child's fever subsided, and she might once more be seen and heard, playing with her sister, in the halls and galleries. Her illness had merely been an attack of a few hours' duration, but it had left her strangely changed. There was no great weakness, but the last falling leaves scarcely struck the ground more lightly than her tiny feet, and her slight, frail figure, pale features, and large, gleaming eyes, seemed at times wholly spiritual in their fragile beauty. The twins, once so alike, scarcely seemed like sisters now. Every one marked the change, except Desmond. He would not see danger, now that, as he said, she had got over the illness which had so much alarmed him. The far more dangerous symptoms which her case now presented were not apparent to him, and he would not hear of danger from others.

“She is getting strong,” he always said; “her illness has cut her up, just at first, that’s all!”

But he kept the child near him, day by day, more and more.

“Henry,” said Lilian to Lord Rossendale, a few days after the child’s illness, “Henry, I don’t see you learning your part for our play. You are taking no trouble about it, really.”

“Because I don’t think the play will take place, Lilian,” he answered, “I wonder you are so sure about it.”

“Why! the day we fixed is within three weeks, and nearly all our preparations are made. What do you mean?”

“You are wonderfully thoughtless, Lilian,” he said, stiffly. “That child of Desmond’s is dying, don’t you see?”

“Oh, no,” interposed Mrs. Clinton, who had entered unperceived. “My dear Henry, I never should have thought you would take such a fancy. The child’s just growing a little too fast!”

“ Doctor Browne has told me she is in a rapid decline,” he replied. “ He don’t think she has more than a fortnight’s prospect of life.”

Mrs. Clinton looked perfectly shocked ; for it would really be most unpleasant if a death were to take place in the house.

“ Oh ! poor little creature !” cried Lilian.
“ But they will take her away, of course.”

“ To be sure,” said Mrs. Clinton, “ nothing would be so good as change of air. I’ll recommend it to Mr. Desmond.”

“ On no account, Mrs. Clinton,” said Lord Rossendale. “ I will not have any hints given of that sort. Desmond may consult Dr. Browne, and do as he pleases.”

“ But really,” remonstrated Mrs. Clinton, “ you are by no means called upon to turn your house into a hospital for the children of mere acquaintances, and give up all your plans in this manner.”

“ I wish Desmond to do as he pleases,” was the sole reply, and it was so uttered that it silenced both its hearers.

Lord Rossendale had been for the last few days labouring under a fit of hourly increasing moroseness ; his sullen temper found nothing but irritation in Lilian's lively spirits, and Mrs. Clinton's frivolous talk ; he was thoroughly tired of the theatrical preparations, and the thought of Christmas festivities, gay banquets, and overflowing rooms, had become odious to him. Sullen and unsociable, he felt indifferent to any external shadow that might darken the atmosphere around him ; but he hated the thought of society, and the self-restraint it would impose on him—he enjoyed nothing just now but the free indulgence of his splenetic humour. Therefore, there was no great unselfishness in his willingness to retain Desmond and his dying child, although such would appear to be the case. And he did not attempt to deceive himself or others ; for since the demon of ill-temper had taken temporary possession of him, he often assured those around him, that he hated Christmas, and that the plays and ball would be a consummate bore.

But Lilian could not endure the thought of losing her expected triumph and pleasure, and Mrs. Clinton was irritated beyond control by her son-in-law's continued sullenness. She resolved to ignore his prohibition, and suggest to Desmond the move she so much desired.

She took the opportunity one wet morning, when Lord Rossendale was safe out hunting, and she, with Desmond, Alice, and Wilfred, was sitting by the fire, idling, as people often do on a wet winter's morning.

She called little Kate to her side. The child had been sitting on the rug at her father's feet, and taking the little half-unwilling hand, she said, in her softest tones :

“ So papa would not go out hunting, but staid with little Kate. Was that it, Mr. Desmond ? ”

“ That was partly my reason,” he replied ; “ besides, both my horses are amiss.”

“ How thin she is ! ” said Mrs. Clinton in accents of profound concern, holding Kate by one shoulder, and passing her hand down the

child's arm. "And she looks very pale, too. She wants change of air, I'm afraid; there is nothing like it for children when they get delicate."

"She must get a little stronger," said Desmond, "before we can travel; she soon will, I hope."

He looked at Alice, but saw only sorrowful sympathy in her eyes.

Mrs. Clinton did not venture to pursue the subject just then; and in a few moments Desmond left the room, his child following him.

"Surely he ought to take her somewhere," said Mrs. Clinton to Alice, as the door closed.

"Oh, mamma! she could scarcely travel," said Alice. "Her strength is quite gone, though her father will not allow himself to see the state of the case."

"Well!" observed Mrs. Clinton, "I must say I cannot admire Mr. Desmond's conduct. It's all very well to have a great deal of feeling, and strong affections, but they should not

degenerate into selfishness. It's very Irish, too, his inflicting himself upon Lilian and Henry in this sort of way."

"Henry wishes him to stay," said Alice. "Besides he cannot go."

"Nonsense," was Mrs. Clinton's sole reply, and silence prevailed until the entrance of Lilian, who came in, looking much less bright than usual.

She threw herself on the sofa beside her mother in an attitude of profound *ennui*.

"It's dreadful being in such uncertainty about all our arrangements," she said, querulously. "Henry is really too provoking. Mr. Desmond is with him now; he was talking of going to the Isle of Wight next week for his child's health, and Henry insists on their staying here, unless Dr. Browne orders them away."

"Most extraordinary!" said Mrs. Clinton. "And Mr. Desmond really said he was going!"

"He did, mamma; it was the least he could do, I think; but Henry said in his most determined way, 'It is not to be thought of, Des-

mond ; your child is better here than she could be after travelling to the Isle of Wight. Desmond, you will oblige Lady Rossendale and myself by remaining ;' and, mamma, he gave me such a look when he said 'Lady Rossendale,' that I was obliged to come forward, and say something about wishing him to remain. It is too provoking !"

Her own disappointment, her husband's contradiction, her sense of total powerlessness to resist his iron will, were too much for Lilian, until angry tears of vexation came to her relief. Her mother soothed and scolded her by turns, expressing, all the time, a lively horror of her son-in-law's whimsical hospitality, and Desmond's unpardonable selfishness.

Thus general discomfort was established among all the inmates of Norneley Manor.

Two days more, and little Kate was no longer to be seen — the rapidly-increasing weakness had given way to entire torpor — and she lay on the bed she was no more to

leave, till she quitted it for a still calmer resting-place.

Dr. Browne told Wilfred and Alice, as they stood together in the hall waiting to hear his report, that the child could scarcely live another day, that effusion on the brain had taken place, and that *they* might tell the father, for he dared not.

“I will tell him,” said Alice, as the doctor departed.

“It is a cruel task,” Wilfred said. “Such offices are fitter for me; but do as you will.”

And as they spoke, Desmond appeared.

“Mrs. Lester is with Kate,” he said.
“What did the doctor say to you?”

There was no answer for a moment; but Wilfred turned away, saying, as he left the hall:

“Desmond, you will trust through all?”

They were alone together. Alice needed not to speak, for Desmond saw his child’s sentence in her face. He turned from her,

walked a few steps, and stood leaning against the wall, his eyes fixed on hers. At last, he spoke.

“I am to lose her, then?”

Alice came to his side.

“She will not suffer,” she said, “but her release is near.”

“Oh! how could I have hoped so long! I never, never believed it till now!”

And his head sunk upon his hands.

Alice would have died to comfort him, but she had no words. She stood close beside him, watching him anxiously. He was struggling for resignation — trying to give her up.

“It would be kindest to leave him,” Alice thought.

She turned away. He heard her retreating step, and raising his head, murmured :

“Will you not stay with me?”

And in an instant, she was at his side again ; but neither spoke till many slow, sad minutes had passed on.

“Shall I ask Wilfred to come to you,” Alice said, at last.

“No,” he replied, “only you—only you just now.”

“I will not leave you,” she replied. “Be comforted, Mr. Desmond, it is a sinless and a happy life that is now nearing its change.”

“But I shall lose her. I shall be alone, with my best hope gone from me.”

“You have another child,” she said.

“Oh, not like her!” he answered. “She was scarcely a child. She was my fireside angel! She would have been my good influence for ever, and I must lose her!”

What could Alice say? Silently she stood beside him till the minutes grew to hours, and the December twilight replaced the wintry sunshine that had streamed in through the windows.

Mrs. Lester entered, and asked him to come up and see his child. She was awake. The torpor had ceased, and she had asked for him.

“Come with me,” he said to Alice.

And they went together to Kate’s bedside.

She knew them both instantly; and stretching out both her tiny hands, she drew them towards her. They could not speak a word.

“Papa, won’t you kiss me?” said the child, trying to raise herself. “Papa, bid me good night—I am going to sleep.”

He bent over her, and took the little wasted form in his arms.

“You shall sleep here, my child,” he said, “and I shall be near you when you wake.”

He had almost a hope.

“No,” said the child, “I shall not wake here, papa. Alice, tell him where I am going.”

“He knows, my darling, he knows,” murmured Alice.

“And don’t let him be too sorry,” continued Kate; “and don’t go away from him! Alice, stay with papa!”

Without a word, Maurice Desmond drew his right hand from his dying child’s grasp,

and extended it towards Alice. She met his look of bitter sorrow, wild entreaty, contending grief, and earnest hope—a look all passion and agony, yet lighted with something like a gleam from heaven—and she laid her hand in his, which closed upon it as if the treasure would never again be relinquished.

The child laid her head upon the united hands.

“Alice will stay, papa,” she said. “Now lay me down again. Give me your hand, papa, and give me yours, Alice.”

She lay, holding them both. They stooped and kissed her, Alice’s tears falling fast on the heavy golden tresses of the child.

“Don’t cry,” she said; “I am going home, Alice. I do not want to grow up. Let me say good-night to Lina, and to Mr. Lynne.”

Alice rose, and soon returned with Wilfred and the child, who entered timidly and slowly, awed, yet ignorant of the dread mystery about to take place.

Wilfred knelt down, the dying child before

him, and at his side the other, and low and earnestly repeated the prayer in our visitation service “ For a sick Child.”

“ Thank you,” said Kate, when he had finished. “ Good night, Lina. You will be very good, and come to me some day.”

Before the awe-struck child could answer, a convulsive shudder passed over the countenance of the dying twin.

“ Come near me, papa, I can’t see you! Come, Alice !” she said.

They each took her by the hand, bent over her, and heard her last “ Good night.”

Little Kate was dead.

The other child pressed forward, put her bright head between her father and Alice, saw the awful mysterious change.

“ We are not twins any longer !” she cried, and broke into bitter wailing.

Wilfred carried her from the room, and Alice and Desmond were left alone with their dead.

CHAPTER III.

But, oh ! why didst thou not stay here below
To bless us with thy heav'n-loved innocence,
To slake his wrath whom sin has made our foe,
To turn swift-rushing black perdition hence,
To stand 'twixt us and our deserved smart ?
But thou canst best perform that office where thou art.

MILTON.

WHAT signified now Lord Rossendale's morose humour, Mrs. Clinton's fretfulness, or Lilian's disappointed vanity ? They shrunk into nothing before the reality of death and sorrow. These minor sufferers were awed even by the restless, anxious gleam in the tearful eyes of the lonely child—much more did they recoil from the look of settled grief in the

father's face. Only Wilfred and Alice could speak to him while that little corpse was lying over head. He had no word for any other—not even for his only child. She was kindly cared for by Mrs. Lester, and petted and noticed by Mrs. Clinton and Lilian when it suited their fancy, but her father could not bear her presence.

Lord Rossendale was kind in all things—in all *things*—but he knew nothing of kind words or gentle sympathies, such as his afflicted guest then needed. He made all arrangements for the funeral, agreed to Alice's request that a sunny corner of Norneley churchyard should be prepared for Kate's last resting-place, and paid every outward sign of respect to the sorrow of his friend—that sorrow, within whose sphere he dared not come.

Two days passed by, and Alice and Desmond stood together, for the last time, beside the bed where lay all that remained of what they both had loved so tenderly. It seemed as if the spirit, in departing, had stamped the forsaken clay with a beauty such as it had never before

worn, fair as it was in life. The pure pale features with their solemn smile, the closed eyes, the holy brow, the bright fair hair, lying in a long curve beside the colourless cheeks, the hands crossed upon the breast that had never known a storm—she was more like an entranced saint than a dead child. Alice had brought some of the bright leaves and berries of the holly to lay beside her, but they seemed unmeet companions for the stainless lily that was withering there, and she had taken them away and left the couch ungarnished, save by one branch of the white datura, which hung its vast sculptured bells from an alabaster vase at the head of the bed.

Little Kate had once said to Alice that it was a flower, she thought, which angels might love. She was an angel now, and Alice fancied that, midst the flowers of Paradise, she might still be conscious of this earthly offering, and of the love that had thus found expression.

And Alice and Desmond stood there hand in hand. Not as they had stood before, through the long bitter hours of Kate's last day on

earth, he sorrowing alone, despite the haunting of her unexpressed sympathy ; she, longing to give the comfort he had not dared to seek : but together, together now, in heart and soul united in one grief, one faith, one immortal love, unspoken still, but no longer unexpressed ; for, in the solemn presence of death, their hands and hearts had joined, and the silent vows were acknowledged, not in words, that death could never break.

Hand in hand they left the room, and the form of her whom on the darker side of the grave they would never more behold ; and hand in hand shortly afterwards they walked together beside the river, through the deep glen of the forest, talking—for words had come at last—of their united future.

They were no common lovers. Death and sorrow had solemnized their love, heightened it from a pure passion to an immortal tie. It sprung up amid the rains, under a clouded sky ; it grew to the clear heaven above them.

What a change there was on Desmond's countenance. Sorrow, hope, and joy had in

the last few days left successive traces there which after years would not obliterate. His bright countenance was not darkened by all the shadows that had passed over it, but it wore a soberer and a clearer light ; there was a look in his eyes as though their tears had never blinded them, but rather revealed a glory and a loveliness whose memory haunted them still.

“ Alice,” he said, “ my own Alice, in the darkest hour of my life you came to be my good angel. How can I ever thank Heaven as I ought ! I rebelled against the sorrow which seemed too hard to bear, yet when it came, it brought with it a blessing I had not dared to hope for ; and though I have lost my child, I can feel nothing but thankfulness.”

“ You will learn to be thankful for the very loss,” said Alice, “ thankful that you have a child in Heaven.”

“ And *you* on earth—*you*, for ever Alice !”

She did not answer him in words, but drew closer to his side.

It was in the midst of their common sorrow, that her affection for him blossomed into love.

When she knelt beside him to receive the last “Good-night” of his dying child, the thought rushed into her heart that she could never leave him ; that, from that moment, they had one future ; and then, like a sunburst, came the knowledge that he loved her even as she would love him—that they two were one for evermore. And in the holy presence of the dead, their “spirits rushed together.”

And now they talked of their home by the Atlantic waves—of the country unknown to Alice, but already loved, where their future lives should pass, and where they hoped to leave such “footprints on the sands of time” as should prove that they had not lived only for each other.

They were engaged, as the term is ; and they agreed that after the funeral they would make their engagement known. Desmond shrunk from attracting notice to himself or Alice, just then ; and she thought it best to wait until this last trial was over. To ask her mother’s consent seemed but a form, so sure of receiving it did she feel ; to tell her all would be an

effort, it always is to speak, however superficially, of our inmost feelings to unsympathising ears. But Alice felt certain of her mother's approval, knowing how Mrs. Clinton openly avowed that she would rejoice at the "establishment" of both her daughters; knowing too, that she liked Desmond, that his circumstances could not reasonably be objected to, and that she could well spare her, though no other child would remain to be her companion.

Thus no doubts and fears were there to form floating clouds upon the lovers' heaven. They looked on their united future with as much calm certainty as could be given to any earthly hope.

The evening before the day of the funeral, Lord Rossendale received the announcement of the Rector's dangerous and sudden illness, and thus the duty of reading the burial service devolved upon Wilfred.

In the cold, misty daybreak of a December morning, they laid the greenest sods of the churchyard upon the little grave, and planted a

group of lilies at its feet, and a white rose-tree beside the head-stone.

The same day Mr. Hornby died, and Lord Rossendale formally offered the living to Wilfred, and was unutterably surprised when, after a word of earnest thanks, he asked for two days time to consider before he accepted a life so full of attractions to him.

He thought much and deeply over it; for his wishes and inclinations all drew him towards the life of a country rector, with its pleasing duties and its pure quiet atmosphere: the turmoil and noise of cities was to him peculiarly distasteful, and he had a child's delight in "the things of earth, water, and skies," a delight which he had never enjoyed for a lengthened period, having all his life dwelt in towns.

"To him, the meanest flower that blows could give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears;"

and the waving trees, the floating cloud-shadows, the broad purple moorland, woke in his soul a rapture and a love too seldom felt among the blind and deaf children of earth, who live in a world of beauty and of melody,

unconscious of both, looking only at the puppet-shows of society, and listening to its sounding brass.

Wilfred would not follow his heart's strongest wish till long thought and earnest prayer had enabled him to see clearly whether his path of duty led him through the sunny vale he longed to traverse ; and if not, if he saw that his pastures were not to be by the still waters, but that he must toil on in the barren wilderness, he would not pause to reason, to talk sophistry with himself, and become the willing dupe of his worser nature, as many do ; he would turn his back on the way he wished to go, and walk firmly on, the faster and the straighter for his human regrets.

Wilfred was little to be seen during those two days ; he was not much missed. Lord Rossendale and Mrs. Lester were both greatly interested for the family of the good old rector, and they felt his loss, as of one remembered from their infant years, and always venerated and esteemed. There was much conversation, too, about the circumstances and cause of his sudden death,

an event which at once extinguished the last lingering hope in Lilian's mind that the plays might take place after all—for Lord Rossendale was determined, as he said, to show his respect for the memory of his rector, by remaining in seclusion for some time ; not, however, abstaining for more than three days from the hunting field, which in his gloomiest hours still possessed for him a grave charm.

Let us return to Alice and Desmond, as they walked together through the woods, on the afternoon after Kate's funeral. The sunset light flamed upon the hill-side, faded away, and gave place to broad, clear moonlight, before they returned to the house. They took no note of time—it had ceased to them ; their moments stood still while they surveyed the future before them, lit up by their mutual love, now at last confessed.

For Alice loved at last. At last her soul launched itself on that broad ocean where so many hearts are shipwrecked, so many hopes entombed—that sea into which every woman throws herself, sooner or later, to sink or swim ;

to be beaten back, perhaps, on the arid rocks of life, or to struggle with storms and waves, or like Alice, to embark fearlessly on sunny waters, whose steady tide would bear her towards the far haven, which to her, was never out of sight.

She loved, truly and entirely, and it was her first love too, for she now felt how different it was from the crowd of wandering fancies, passionate dreams, and idle thoughts, which like bees about a flower, had swarmed around the image of Sir Aubrey Howard, in the wild days of her first youth. Truly, it was not a year since she had trembled at his touch, and felt her spirit fail within her at the sound of his parting words ; but time has little to do with the growth of souls, and moral years had, since those days, passed over Alice's head. Her first youth was over, with its idolatry, its shadow-worship, its self deception. She had come out into the light of truth ; she had seen that the beautiful, which her soul adored, was ever with the good, and she had grown wise with the wisdom which the world cannot recognise ; she had learnt self-conquest and self-direction, and

no longer decked her clay-idols with fading flowers plucked from the luxuriant gardens of her own wild fancy.

Maurice Desmond won her friendship by his truth and earnestness, her sympathy by his sorrow, her love—but who can trace the birth of love? that electric power of the spirit by which we break into light and flame at the approach of one—only one—among the many who may share our friendship and our sympathy. She loved him, and would go through life beside him. Her destiny stood before her, unveiled, and bright with hope.

While these two walked homewards under the gleaming stars, far different minds were holding commune beside the brilliantly-lighted table in Lady Rossendale's boudoir. Lilian sat there with her mother, both idly plying some gay and totally useless work—both sighing, at intervals, the quick, fretful sigh of discontent, both talking random words, which by degrees gathered into conversation.

“Oh, mamma,” said Lilian, flinging aside her silks and gold twist, “how provoking every-

thing is ! I had looked forward to such a delightful winter ! ”

“ Well my dear, I only hope you may make up for it next year ; and I suppose Henry won’t object to a little quiet society by and bye.”

“ But I had so looked forward to our plays, mamma ! and Henry might have allowed them after all, if it had not been for Mr. Hornby’s death ! ”

“ Which was nobody’s fault, my dear ; and you must have expected it very soon, he was so old. Wilfred is the gainer by it, at any rate.”

“ He has not accepted the living yet,” said Lilian.

“ But of course he will,” replied Mrs. Clinton. “ And marry Miss Hornby, perhaps.”

“ Oh, mamma ! she might be his aunt ! ”

“ They would be a model pair,” said Mrs. Clinton, sarcastically, “ equal to two clergymen —rector and curate ; and delightful neighbours for you, Lilian ! ”

“ Wilfred will never marry ; I think, and Miss Hornby is going to her relations in

Devonshire, so, mamma, your vision is destroyed. How very late Alice is!"

"Very," said Mrs. Clinton, uneasily; "she is walking with Mr. Desmond. I wonder when he will go away."

"On Wednesday, mamma; he told Henry so. He and Alice are inseparables. Do you approve of it?"

"Approve of what, my dear? Surely you don't think Alice could for a moment admit the attentions of an Irish widower, or that he ever dreamt of such a thing?"

"Alice is not like other people, mamma," said Lilian. "She is romantic in her ideas, and would go to Ireland or to Kamschatka if the right individual presented himself."

"Yes; she would marry a starving poet, or an exiled Pole, if a genuine one were to cross her path; but poor Mr. Desmond is no *héros de roman*; a great, rough, common-place, estimable Irish squire! My dear Lilian, this is a wilder notion than mine about Wilfred and Miss Hornby. You are giving me windmills to fight with."

“ I have strong doubts, mamma,” Lilian replied, “ whether Mr. Desmond is not in earnest in his admiration of Alice. She is his greatest friend, and I am sure her devotion to his children and her grief for that poor little thing, must have made her something more. And there are attractive qualities in Mr. Desmond, I think ; Wilfred is excessively fond of him, and he and Alice always have the same likes and dislikes. Mamma, I am confident there is something in it.”

Mrs. Clinton’s countenance darkened as Lilian spoke. She recalled many little circumstances which confirmed the idea now suggested to her mind. It rapidly took form, grew, and overshadowed her thoughts.

“ Too bad of Alice !” she said, after a pause. “ Unpardonable, of both her and Mr. Desmond, if they really have thought of such a thing ; and Alice never told me !”

“ Oh, mamma !” cried Lilian, frightened at the effect of her words, “ depend upon it, Alice will not leave you in the dark, and even if I am right, it need not be such a horror to you.

Alice would be very happy, I dare say, and there is nothing against Mr. Desmond!"

"I have very different views for my daughter," said Mrs. Clinton, stiffly. "I could not for a moment tolerate the idea of her marrying that man, with his obscure Irish connexions, his encumbered property, his—Why, Lilian, he is a perfect nonentity, neither family, station, or property. It is out of the question."

The distant opening of a side door was heard.

"They are come in," said Lilian. "Mamma, pray don't frighten Alice."

But it was not easy to lay the evil spirit which one word had evoked. Mrs. Clinton left the room, and met Alice in the passage, followed her to her own room, entered, shut the door, and stood face to face with her daughter.

Alice had come in, resolved to tell her all. Now was the time.

"Mamma," she said, her voice faltering, "dear mamma, may I talk to you now for a few minutes? Will you sit down here for a little while?"

But Mrs. Clinton stood rigidly before her,

more than ever incensed, now that Alice's first words had all but proved Lilian's suggestion true.

"I can imagine what you are going to tell me, Alice," said Mrs. Clinton. "It is time I should hear it from yourself, having just heard it from others."

"Oh, mamma, I longed to tell you all, but till now I could not. You do not suppose we told any one else first! we never thought of that."

We! the pronoun roused Mrs. Clinton's anger to its height, and smoothly but heavily the torrent overflowed. "So you have entered into an engagement with Mr. Desmond without consulting any one; and I suppose you were about to inform me of the event. Very independent and praiseworthy conduct, Alice, I must say! Will you inform me of the rest of your plans? or is it more desirable that I should be kept in ignorance of your further arrangements?"

Alice was thunderstruck at this unpropitious commencement of the interview; but she did

not despair. It was but a cloud of temper, she thought.

“Mamma,” she said, “do not be angry with me; believe me, I would not keep you in ignorance, but it was natural that Mr. Desmond should wait until after the funeral to—”

“To what? to propose to you, or to make your secret engagement known?”

“There was no engagement, mamma, until—until to-day; and I would not have promised, but I never doubted that you would consent. My father’s friend—*your* friend—I thought, mamma!”

“Alice, your total ignorance of life is too intolerable; because your father was kind to Mr. Desmond, and because for his sake I have always been civil to him, you imagine that I would allow you to marry a perfectly unknown individual—an Irish fortune-hunter.”

Alice’s spirit rose indignantly at the bitter falsehood. She would have cast her fortune to the winds rather than hear such words; she could not speak, but stood with flashing eyes and crimson brow before her mother.

“ Alice ! is that the way to look at me ? Sit down.”

Alice obeyed, the angry colour fading from her cheek.

“ Forgive me,” she said ; “ and do not speak such cruel words of him. Listen to me, mamma ; he is not what you think ; he is Irish, indeed, but you know he is of good family, and not poor ; and oh ! he is so good and true, and he has suffered so much ! Oh, mother, you will not refuse !”

“ Nonsense, Alice ; I can’t believe that such a common-place individual can have made any serious impression upon you. If he has, you will get over it ; for most certainly I do refuse. I call the possessor of an encumbered estate in Ireland worse than poor ; and as for family, I suppose you mean that like every Irishman I ever met, he traces his descent from some half-starved king of the dark ages. That don’t constitute good family in my ideas.”

Alice might have smiled at her mother’s confused ideas of the Norman and Celtic races ; but it was too serious a matter, her whole

future was clouding over, as her mother spoke. But there was hope still. She rose, and came timidly to Mrs. Clinton's side.

"I will do nothing without your approval, mamma. I will obey you in this as in all things. You know that you can trust me; and to-morrow—to-night, perhaps—may I not speak to you again?"

Mrs. Clinton's temper was a little softened by Alice's submission—only her temper, not her resolution—for this time she was indeed resolved; it was not, as Alice thought, a short anger which prompted her refusal; it was a firm determination—firm as a rock in the bed of a stream, whether the noisy waters foam above it, or lie smooth and placidly around.

"Well, Alice," she said, "I am glad, at all events, to see that you do not persist in your most unjustifiable conduct. I have no doubt you will keep your promise. I am quite ready to hear what you have to say, and shall do so to-night; but I assure you, Alice, my consent is completely out of the question. I leave you now to think over your conduct, and resolve on a more proper course of action."

And without looking back, Mrs. Clinton retired, leaving Alice alone with her falling hopes.

But Desmond's voice still echoed in her heart, and not her mother's angry words. They were but angry words, she thought. Nothing seemed real, but Desmond's love and her own. Against this, nothing could prevail. But she was saddened, vexed by the scene she had just gone through. Though her soul was full of music, there was a shrill, low note of discord marring all, which would not be silenced.

CHAPTER IV.

Oh ! beloved, it is plain
I am not of thy worth, nor for thy place :
And yet because I love thee, I obtain
From that same love this vindicating grace,
To live on still in love, and yet in vain—
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

MRS. BROWNING.

ON leaving Alice, Mrs. Clinton proceeded at once in search of her son-in-law, resolved to tell him of his guest's presumption, and claim his sympathy in her indignation. A woman vexed, as Mrs. Clinton was, always flies to one of her male relatives for support, hoping to twine her weak, angry intention around the pillar of his

firm will, forming thereby a complete purpose ; for where a man and a woman make common cause, the cause is strong indeed, and well defended.

She found Lord Rossendale in his study, half asleep, reclining before the fire in a vast arm-chair, a newspaper resting upon his knees, and the old pointer Bess stretched on the rug beside him. She felt no shyness at entering his sanctum, but aroused him at once.

“ Henry, I must speak to you.”

She could not startle him out of his habitual stiff courtesy. He rose, placed a chair for her, banished his dog from the rug, and sat down to listen.

She told him all her grievance in many words. At the first pause, he said :

“ I am very sorry, Mrs. Clinton, that an occurrence so distressing to you should have taken place here ; but it seems we are to have a series of more or less painful events. You are resolved to withhold your consent ?”

“ Certainly—most assuredly,” she said. “ I have much higher views for my Alice. Am I

not right?" Surely, you would not approve of the connexion?"

"As far as I am personally concerned," he replied, "I should not object to it. I like Maurice Desmond; that is to say, there is nothing in him to dislike, and I have a good opinion of him. But I quite agree with you, he would not be a good *parti* for Alice. I believe his estates are heavily encumbered; besides, Alice is perfectly certain to do better. She is very young."

"That is exactly what I think," said Mrs. Clinton, enchanted at his meeting her thought so readily. "It would be quite wrong of me to yield to such a mere idle fancy on her part. Really I should never forgive myself in after years."

"You might, perhaps, leave it to time," suggested Lord Rossendale. "Give Alice another season in London; and at the end of a year, if they both wish to renew their engagement, let it be so."

Mrs. Clinton shook her head.

"My dear Henry, I know human nature.

Leave a glimmer of hope, and you leave everything. Alice's romance will keep her constant for a year, if there was nothing else to do it; and as for him, he will work upon her feelings now, and worm himself deeper into her affections, to secure himself a place there to the end of the year's probation. Oh, no! I cannot agree to that plan."

"Well, Mrs. Clinton, perhaps you are right," said Lord Rossendale, tired of a discussion which had so little interest for him. "Knock it on the head at once. Desmond has only one more day to be here."

"And if he should speak to you about it, you will let him see that he has not a chance?"

"Of course—poor fellow—but you will let him take leave of her?"

"I shall consider of that."

"There's the gong for dressing," he said, rising hastily, desirous to terminate the interview, and quite regardless of Mrs. Clinton's gracious smile, and murmured thanks for his advice.

We always thank our friends most cordially for their advice when they have given none, but taken our view of the subject with a solicitous gravity, which, be it genuine or the reverse, always answers the purpose, and secures our gratitude.

It was a dreary evening. Desmond saw at once, by his first glimpse of Alice's countenance that all had not prospered with her in the interview from which he had expected the confirmation of his hopes. It was the first time, since his child's death, that he joined the family circle at dinner. All present respected his grief, and except by Mrs. Lester and Wilfred, he was scarcely addressed.

Alice kept aloof from him. She well knew that he would guess the cause. She was more than usually silent, and her presence seemed to add to the gloom that his had occasioned. Mrs. Clinton, however, wore her most placid smile, moved with her most gliding step and graceful bearing, and seemed so tranquil and good-tempered, that Alice hoped the best from

the coming interview, which her mother had promised for that night.

It came, and Alice, scarcely in suspense, entered her mother's room.

“ Well, my dear, I hope you are quite reconciled to my wishes. I trust, Alice, you have resolved to give up your foolish fancy, and be reasonable.”

The soft voice struck despair to Alice's heart—instant despair. She said nothing, did not move, but every trace of colour fled from her cheek.

“ My dear child, be rational. In a few years —nay, a few months—you will thank me that I did not allow this foolish engagement to continue. I am saving you from a wretched marriage, Alice—from a miserable life, where you would find nothing in accordance with your tastes. Mr. Desmond never could make you happy, Alice. He is but a rough, commonplace character after all. You have been touched by his misfortunes, and imagined in him qualities which he does not possess. You are quite unfit for the kind of life to which

he would bring you. In short, Alice, it cannot be."

She would not tell her unworldly, earnest-hearted child, now that she spoke advisedly, of her certain prospects of "doing better," as the world terms it, or of the disadvantages she had discovered in Desmond's social position, of the horrors of a life in the wilds of Ireland, or of the insecurity of his encumbered estate. These considerations, she well knew, would be as nothing to Alice. She took another ground.

"It cannot be, my dear Alice," she went on. "It is not to be thought of for a moment. I am very sorry to distress you, but I must consider your real interests. I must, as a mother should, stand between my child and the gloomy future into which she would blindly rush. Alice, why don't you speak to me?"

Thus addressed, Alice could be no longer silent; and yet, how hard it was to speak when, stunned and heart-crushed, she lay beneath the fresh ruins of her hopes.

"Mother," she said, and her voice was scarcely audible, "I will obey you. It is all

over then. Oh, God help me!" cried poor Alice, as the reality of her sorrow rose before her, a form of darkness and horror.

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Clinton, "don't give way to that sort of silly despair. One would think it was some long and devoted attachment that I was asking you to renounce. I am very sorry for you, Alice, but you have your own imprudence to blame. Come now, my dear, don't let us have a scene!"

And with a smiling countenance, Mrs. Clinton flitted round her daughter, gently patting the fair young head which she had struck down with such a weight of woe; then wandering across the room in search of eau-de-Cologne, and bringing back a glass containing a due mixture of that restorative and water—her notion of *Nepenthe*—she approached Alice with this remedy for despair.

She was rather startled when she saw her child's pale, almost livid face, and fixed eyes, but it relieved her to see Alice accept and instantly swallow the draught. She stooped down and kissed her. She was a mother after

all, and could not grieve her child so bitterly, quite without a pang.

“But it is all for Alice’s own sake—and I do my duty,” she thought to herself, trampling down the rising truth within her, ere it could tell her that she wronged the sacred name of duty, and sinned in driving the chariot of ambition over the corpse of love.

“Now go to bed, my dear,” she said, “and let me see a brighter face to-morrow.”

“To-morrow,” repeated Alice, vacantly. Then turning eagerly towards her mother’s retreating form: “You will let me see him once more,” she cried, hoarsely; “once more, for the last time?”

No one could have refused that pleading look—that supplicating gesture. Mrs. Clinton was struck by the changed voice and the attitude and expression of intense suffering so evident in her stricken child.

“As you will,” she said. “Yes, you shall see him to-morrow. You see I trust you, Alice. Now good night, my dear. Sleep will do you good.”

And smiling upon the ruin she had made, she turned, and left the room.

Alice sat immovable, silent, tearless, as the long winter's night wore on, till by degrees all that might have been, all that was to be, grew into reality before her. She did not feel as one awaking from a dream, but as one from whom the true and real source of all his happiness had been rudely torn. The problem of life had just been solved, the purpose of her being defined ; she had lived—no matter how brief the period—she had lived in the light of truth and love—now she was flung into the darkness—she could not see one step of the path before her. All was blotted out, all thrown into the dark abyss which seemed ready to receive her shipwrecked spirit.

“ There is to be no happiness for me in this life,” she said within herself ; and then thought of little Kate, happy in her early grave, and envied the child-angel who had never suffered. But the repining voice was silent, as before her rose the pictured thought of another glorified spirit, whose probation had been longer and

darker, and who through much tribulation had entered into rest. It seemed to call to her from a higher and a fairer region than even the child's bright heaven; and half conscious of the holy presence of her lost friend, she knelt, and prayed for patience, not release.

And then she slept, the heavy, dreamless sleep that follows a shock of pain—a shock renewed when the inexorable morning brought back consciousness. It came, the day that was to see the fall of even the ruined remnants of her hope—the day when she must take final leave of Desmond. Its first hours passed in a restless longing for the time of trial, an anxious wish that this sorrow should be past and over, and the moments never seemed so slow in passing as they did now.

There was no sympathy for Alice. Mrs. Clinton knew too little of her feelings to be able to feel with her, Lord Rossendale did not give her a thought, and Wilfred was ignorant of her distress. It was on this morning that he announced his intention of accepting the living of Norneley, and his mind was not a little

absorbed in contemplating his happy prospects, and in forming a thousand plans for the good of his parishioners. It was, however, a solemn joy, for the sunlight of his prosperity did not blind him from the far radiance of his guiding-star, duty; and he rejoiced with trembling lest he should fail to bear the full burden of the labours he undertook so gladly—gladly, but not lightly.

“I am so delighted, Wilfred,” cried Lilian, when his decision was made known to her, “so glad you are to be our rector. Now we shall have a model parish—daily service, everything correct.”

“I trust I shall be enabled to do my best,” replied Wilfred, very gravely. “When so much happiness is given me, I have no excuse, if I do not render all obedience to the giver.”

“Then you really like the parsonage, and the neighbourhood, and you enjoy the thoughts of being a country parson?” asked Mrs. Clinton.

“I do, indeed,” he replied. “It fulfils my dream of happiness. I have nothing now to

wish for, as far as earthly pleasure is concerned."

Strange as it may seem, there was something not wholly pleasing to Lilian in her cousin's unqualified expressions of happiness. She did not acknowledge to herself the feeling, but in her inmost heart she would have preferred to see a shadow upon Wilfred's joy, the shadow of herself. But it had long vanished. Her form stood no longer between him and the light—his soul's eclipse was over.

It so chanced, that shortly after breakfast he found himself alone with Alice, and then, in the midst of her kind words to him on the subject engrossing his thoughts, he detected that all was not well with her, and soon by his gentle, brotherly affection, and tenderness, he drew forth the story of her sorrow and of Desmond's love. And Alice received his sympathy; not the diluting, weakening sympathy with which some friends are wont to drown the sleeping energies of the afflicted; but the sympathy which gives strength and support, while it assuages that thirst of the heart which

bids the sufferer seek it, in the fever of his spirit.

Nor sympathy alone did Wilfred give ; but "courage to endure and to obey," a resolute will, a firmness to "suffer and be strong," were infused into Alice's spirit by his invigorating counsels, his words of strength and truth, and commanding her to the Lord of all power and might, he left her, nerved for the coming trial, strong in the noble intrepidity of resolute patience.

Maurice Desmond was not unprepared for his share of the impending woe ; a few words of Lord Rossendale's had almost enlightened him, or rather thrown him into darkness, and in Alice's countenance the evening before, he had read something that was not the confirmation of his happiness. He sought eagerly for an interview with her, and was not relieved, although she readily yielded to his proposal of another walk in the woods.

And then she told him all ; that she never could be his, that she had been too precipitate, had erred in anticipating, as she had done, her

mother's consent, for that consent was withheld ; and then she implored his forgiveness for the deep pain, of which she well knew she was the cause.

He held her by the hand as she spoke, his grasp tightening at each word ; she ceased, but he did not relax the iron pressure, and his steadfast, earnest look held her more closely than even his strong hand could do.

“ Alice,” he said, “ is this no pain to you ? are you ready to relinquish all that we talked of, only yesterday, and that you said was happiness ? Oh, Alice, I called you mine—I heard you say you loved me—is it to be all retracted now ? There is no change in *you*, Alice ? and if not, what can part us ?”

Alice strove to speak, but the wild tears broke forth and left no passage for a word. He saw that indeed there was no change in her, that she was his, in heart and soul.

He drew her close to him, held her to his heart, trembling, sobbing as she was, and seated her beside him on a fallen tree ; he waited silently till she grew calm, listening for her first word.

“ Maurice, it is my duty,” she faltered ; “ do not make it too hard for me !”

“ Your duty, Alice ! then it is as I feared, and your mother opposes us ; but why must you yield to her—forgive me, Alice, if I say caprice—in such a case as this, why must you sacrifice my happiness and yours to the prejudices of—”

Alice’s entreating look checked him.

“ Maurice,” she said, imploringly, “ I thought you would help me to do right.”

“ But it is not right,” he added, impetuously. “ Which is the greatest wrong, to blight the happiness of two lives, or to resist a cruel command, which, though it is your mother’s, you are not, at your age, bound to obey ? No, Alice, to break the heart that loves you is to do wrong !”

“ Oh, Maurice, it is you who are cruel now ; believe me, we shall both be supported and comforted if we act rightly now ; and what I believe to be right, *is* right to me, and I must do it, whatever the cost may be. Don’t, oh, for Heaven’s sake do not turn against me ; we said we would support each other in all

duties, and in this bitter one do not fail me, Maurice!"

She spoke with the intense earnestness of one whose life hangs upon the granting of his prayer. Her eyes gazing through their tears upwards to Maurice's, her hands clasped in wild entreaty, her whole form expressive of supplication—what could he say? There was no answer. He might have thought her sense of duty was morbid or overstrained, but now that thought left him. His high, pure moral sense, lately awakened to full keenness, acknowledged the truth, the right. He saw that Alice must not disobey; he would not tempt her. He was silent.

But he did not despair. He resolved to plead his own cause with Mrs. Clinton. He could not think that a woman's whim could oppose a steady resistance to the happiness of her child, and he trusted that he should overcome the few worldly objections which he thought formed the only obstacles to his union with Alice, in her mother's eyes. He told Alice of his intention, and bade her cheer up, and

join him in his hope. Surely the widow of his friend would not refuse him the gift he sought, precious as it was.

But Alice did not brighten as he spoke; she saw no chance of a reversal of their sentence, yet still she did not endeavour to dissuade him from his purpose.

They rose, and slowly, mournfully walked home together. Desmond at once asked Mrs. Clinton to grant him a private interview, to which she coldly consented.

“Mr. Desmond,” she said, when they were alone together, “I think you might have spared me the annoyance of saying to you in person what I thought Alice had said for me—that I cannot consent to her marriage with you.”

He could not but feel irritated at her cold, positive tone.

“Miss Clinton told me,” he replied, “that you had strong objections, but she did not tell me what they were; and I think I am justified in asking why you consider me utterly unfit to claim your daughter’s hand. Unworthy I am indeed—so are all others. Mrs. Clinton, you

must allow me to ask, what are your personal objections to my character or circumstances?"

It was Mrs. Clinton's turn to be irritated, at the manly self-respect which she looked upon as Irish assurance (would that we had more of it among us!) She replied in her most frigid accents.

"Mr. Desmond, I do not feel myself called on to answer these questions; pardon me, but I think you would have shown more good-feeling by leaving them unasked. However, I will merely state that though I have the highest opinion of your personal character, I have very different views for my daughter. I contemplate a future for her most unlike that which you would give her."

"She seeks no other—she would be happy with me!"

"Mr. Desmond, you will kindly refrain from mentioning before me the unfortunate, but certainly transient preference which you have obtained from my daughter. She has very properly promised to obey me, and to hold no further intercourse with you. With my con-

sent, she shall never live in Ireland. You will excuse my openness. You wished me to state my objections—that is one of them."

"My home is within two days' journey of this place," Desmond replied. "But it is true," he added, with a bitter inflexion in his voice, "it is true that I live in Ireland, and that I *will* live there, come what may. If you forbid your daughter to share my home, I must live and die alone with my child in the only spot where my darkened life will not be useless."

Mrs. Clinton thought he would at once have offered to concede this point; not that she would have yielded had he done so; but her indignation rose at what seemed to her his preference of Slievemore to Alice, and her pride was stung.

"It would not have altered my resolution, Mr. Desmond," she said, "had you expressed a willingness to sacrifice for Alice's sake this whimsical attachment to your place; but your not doing so, lessens the compunction I might feel in putting a stop to your hopes, for it

proves that your attachment to my daughter cannot be very strong."

There was no reply. He would not display before such eyes the enshrined treasure of his love. Mrs. Clinton continued :

" However that may be, I trust you will see the propriety of seeking no further interview with my daughter before you leave. Of course, such a scene would be distressing to her, and I cannot allow it to take place."

" Since your resolution is fixed, Mrs. Clinton —since, without one kind word, you can thus break the heart of your husband's friend, and destroy the happiness of his favourite child—since you can do this, I have no more to say. May I learn to forgive you !"

" Irish rhetoric," thought Mrs. Clinton ; " extremely rude, though ! Mr. Desmond," she said aloud, " if you think it is in good taste to make such allusions to my bereavement and family circumstances, I cannot prevent your doing so, except by concluding this interview."

And rising slowly, she walked towards the door.

“One word,” he said, before she disappeared.
“In your presence, you will allow me to take
leave of Miss Clinton?”

She granted his petition after a few demurs,
and went in search of Alice.

And Maurice was left alone to struggle with
himself, to crush down his irritated pride, and
conquer his rising anger—to nerve himself
for the pang of parting with Alice, to resolve
upon embracing the highest and hardest duty—
the duty of endurance and submission.

“I learnt it from *her*,” he thought. “I
learnt from her lips, that the highest happiness
must be cast aside if it stands between me and
the right. It were a sin to tempt her—it were
sacrilege, even for the sake of *her* life’s happi-
ness, to bid her turn from what the spirit-voice
within her commands. I can suffer, and she—
she will be happy! Yes, thank God! I can
live under even this affliction—I can live for
my child, and for the poor. The time will not
be long.”

Musing thus, he stood with folded arms, lips
compressed, and eyes looking straight on

through the window, out to the far horizon. His manly, upright form and determined countenance spoke the fixed resolve of one who was about to offer a mighty sacrifice—the sacrifice of life and happiness—without fear and almost without regret. But Alice entered the room, and all was changed. The stateliest tree bends and quivers in every bough when struck by the sharp gust of a winter's storm; and now the resolute lip quivered, the "level eyelids" drooped, his head sunk upon his hands, and the strong man's form bowed down when he saw the mute sorrow in the eyes he loved so well.

Alice did not come alone—her mother was there, doing her duty, too, she thought, and pitying the unhappy lovers quite as much as, in her opinion, their state deserved.

Desmond recovered his firmness, and spoke first.

"I shall go this day," he said. "I shall sleep at the village, and go by the earliest train to-morrow. It is the best thing I can do."

Mrs. Clinton smiled, and murmured something polite, which no one heard. Then there was a silence. They could not trust themselves with words beyond these common-places. They must part, to all outward seeming, as mere acquaintances part—without a sign, a word, or a token exchanged, to lighten the bitter load within them. So is it often in this world—the exterior conceals instead of expressing the internal truth.

They could not prolong this scene, or rather the torture hidden beneath it.

“Good bye,” said Maurice, holding out his hand.

Alice took it; and raising her eyes to his, repeated the word, “Good bye”—often the simple expression of more grief than the human heart can bear. Good bye!—that word, whose bitter meaning is our saddest curse here below—whose echo haunts the brightest hearth, the fairest home. Always, in the youngest, gayest life it has been, or it will be uttered; and I would that, by all who breathe it, its good old origin were remembered, and then its bitterness

would depart, for it would become a prayer :
“ God be with you !”

In the parting of Alice and Desmond, this prayer arose from each severed heart, and did not rise in vain. And this was their good bye.

CHAPTER V.

Hope : with all the strength thou uses
In embracing thy despair :
Love : the earthly love thou losest
Shall return to thee more fair :
Work : make clear the forest tangles
Of the wildest stranger-land :
Trust : the blessed deathly angels
Whisper “ Sabbath hours at hand !”

MRS. BROWNING.

WEEKS passed—slow, dreary winter weeks, although they brought the many festivals of Christmas-time in their course. At Norneley Manor there was no attempt at mirth, although what is called “ society ” was not entirely wanting. There were a few rigid dinner-parties,

and dull visitors staying in the house, whom Lilian knew not how to entertain. It was very different from what she had expected.

On Christmas Day, the rain never ceased; on New Year's Day, there was a fall of snow; the week between, there was scarcely anything but a mixture of both, sleety showers, and a driving east wind.

Lilian was quite glad that Wilfred had given them two services on Christmas Day, and one on each of the following festivals, for it gave her something to do, and was an excuse for ordering the carriage on a wet day. Besides, it was a means of escape from some of the dull visitors, who had religious scruples about going to church on week-days (unless there was a sermon).

To make matters worse, with the second day of the new year, a sharp frost set in, and put a stop to hunting. Lord Rossendale's temper suffered much in consequence of this severe privation. Pheasant-shooting with old Bess was but a poor substitute for the only sport he cared about, so he spent the greatest part of his

time in reading dreary books of “practical science,” or political pamphlets, which told him what he knew before, and proved him to be in the right. No others would he admit into his presence.

Mrs. Lester left Norneley in the beginning of January ; and Mrs. Clinton, who had promised visits to innumerable friends in various parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, departed about the same time with Alice, to visit a favoured few of those whose homes were most accessible by railway, and whose invitations were most pressingly repeated. Mrs. Clinton liked what she called “a little variety,” which meant a succession of changes, and she thought some lively country society would be the very thing for Alice, who did not look well—no wonder, when she toiled so hard to recover from the numbing influence of her sorrow !

She would have looked better, perhaps, if, like most other disappointed young ladies, she had worn her grief on the surface, and allowed her broken spirits to display their melancholy fragments, instead of striving hard to restore

them to their former state. For it was Alice's resolute endeavour not to suffer weakly but nobly ; to submit, indeed, but to act in all things the more rightly for her grievous chastisement ; and she knew it would not be acting rightly to indulge herself by casting a shadow on others, or to annoy her mother by withdrawing from scenes in which she was expected to take a part. So neither Mrs. Clinton, nor any one else, saw a change in Alice ; and all agreed that she had scarcely cared for Desmond, and that they had done well in opposing a marriage so sure to end unhappily. It could only be the damp, cold air from the low woodlands of Norneley that made Alice so strangely pale and thin. A visit to some friends in Northumberland, whose family consisted of numerous young people, and whose place stood on the slope of a border hill not far from the sea, would soon restore her to complete health. They went to Northumberland, and Lord and Lady Rossendale were left alone.

Lilian did not find her home a very lively one ; and want of liveliness to her was a terrible

want. Lord Rossendale could not see the moral starvation which she was enduring ; he went on with his own pursuits and occupations, and took a moderate interest in hers (which, indeed, it would be hard to name, for though not indolent, she was idle.) Occasionally he would bring his pamphlets into her boudoir and read them there, believing that he was making himself extremely agreeable.

Sometimes he would come to her with a confused manuscript, scrawled over the backs of half-a-dozen letters, and desire her to copy it into the form of a letter to some Conservative newspaper, on the then vexed question of Protection and Free Trade. This she would do ; but in doing it, she never disguised her aversion to the tedious task, so that, on its conclusion, he never felt disposed to give her the thanks which she considered her due.

The small amenities of life were not much considered by Lord and Lady Rossendale in their intercourse with each other. She was always striving to make her unwilling husband minister to her thirst for pleasure and excite-

ment, totally regardless of his graver nature and different tastes; while he as constantly endeavoured to bind her down to the pursuits which he conceived she *ought* to like, and secure the assistance of her talents and capabilities in the service of his undertakings. It never occurred to either that their marriage was not a perfectly suitable and happy one; still they were pulling in opposite directions; and neither horses nor human beings can continue this system long, without establishing a galling wound at last.

If the white-winged spirits of Peace and Love, and all gentle virtues, were slowly forsaking the fireside of the manor-house, it would seem that they did so, only to haunt, with all sweet influences, Wilfred's solitary hearth at the rectory. He was, indeed, deeply happy in his new life—a life after his own heart.

A country cross-road, leading from the county town to the village of St. Quentin's divided the lawn and garden of the rectory from the churchyard, which, with the beautiful little church of early English architecture, was

situated within the boundaries of Lord Rossendale's park. Both church and rectory were not above a quarter of a mile from the group of neat cottages which formed the village; and the church, standing upon an elevated knoll of ground, and rearing its cross-crowned spire far above the tallest pines on the slope below, was a conspicuous object to the inmates of each dwelling. The rectory was built on a lower part of the same knoll, and its simple cottage architecture was almost hid from sight by the evergreen rose-plants which twined over every part of it, and whose white and crimson blossoms were the admiration, through many summer days, of the children who attended the adjacent school. The school-house was then gayer still, with its garden of hollyhocks, and its walls of roses, jessamine, and ivy, though at present the latter was its only ornament.

Wilfred was fond of all the beautiful externals which might render truth and goodness fair in the eyes of children and of the childish-hearted poor. He liked the pretty school-house, and his own dwelling, with so much of nature's

innocent beauty thronging round their doors like graceful blessings from the hand of Divine Love ; and he liked the grey old church, with its ancient symbolic carvings, its open seats, its stained east window ; but he put no candles on that simple altar ; he revived no customs of a darker age ; he laid no stumbling-blocks in the path of his simple-minded congregation. No one accused him of innovation ; he changed nothing from the habits of his predecessor, beyond extending the choir of the church, which he effected by instructing the village boys twice a week at his own house, in the art of singing in parts—a task for which he was qualified by his severely perfect taste and correct ear.

Every day new duties rose before him, to which he joyfully applied himself. The school was to be re-modelled ; a lending library in the village, which had fallen into disuse, to be revived ; a parishioner to be warned, another comforted, another visited or assisted ; now a boy, entering upon active life, was to be counselled, and reminded of the only refuge against temptation ; now a girl, leaving her mother's side

for the service of a stranger, to be encouraged with kind words and holy counsel—there was always some such sacred duty for Wilfred to perform.

He was indeed fitted for the pastoral office if, as Coleridge says,

“He prayeth best who loveth best ;”

for in the depths of his solitary heart, there was a fund of affection, which not centering in any one earthly object, extended to all within his sphere, and rose as a spontaneous tribute to the Being whose gift it was.

He had once, as we know, given to a fellow-creature the whole intensity of affection of which his sensitive nature was capable, and it was thrown back into his heart. His grief was long and bitter, for it was the death-struggle of earthly passion; but he was “spiritually minded,” and though the best hopes of happiness below should fail him, he could not but ultimately arise to “life and peace.” And his life indeed was peace, as far as a “sinner in a world of care” can attain the blessing.

It was peace to himself, and would bring

peace to many, for he had now but one object, the spiritual welfare of his flock. To each and all of them he had begun to endear himself by his kind and courteous bearing, and his tenderness and affectionate offices towards all who suffered, either from poverty, sickness, or affliction.

Time passed on ; and at last approached the joyous spring-time. March came, with its storms and smiles, its sunbursts and its dark, driving clouds ; the spirit of life and beauty began to thrill and palpitate through all nature, and the early flowers one by one lifted their fair faces to the sunshine ; the tender green of the hawthorn hedges bent lovingly over the starry primroses, pale scentless violets, and golden celandine that gemmed the turf below ; and in the thick woods millions of lovely things swarmed into life. The annual creation took place once more, bringing rapture to the poet, to the little child, to the sinless birds and bees—a rapture too little felt, or even believed in, by man, creation's lord as he is. Spring came to half the world. It entered into Wilfred's heart,

as did all the sweet influences of nature. It lavished its treasures around the eyes of Lilian and her husband almost unheeded. It woke a fresher faith, a warmer love in Alice's soul ; it suggested gay fancies to her mother's restless brain, with thoughts of coming pleasures, associated, in defiance of nature, with the happy season. And to Mrs. Lynne, our long forsaken friend, what thoughts came with the spring-tide ?

She was not the better for the cutting winds, which at Brighton are the only harbingers of spring. They had given her a cough, which she could not cure, though she tried various "systems" for its removal. First, her own plan, bedclothes and hot gruel ; next, Barbara's, cold water and exercise ; then her husband's, abstinence and general discomfort ; but none succeeded, and at last she bethought herself of doing what she had not done for years, and trying the country air. A star of the first magnitude had just dawned on the boards, not of Her Majesty's Theatre, but of Exeter Hall. Some missionaries had lately returned from the in-

terior of Africa, with a few converts from the banks of the Niger (who had several times in the course of their homeward voyage been mistaken for a present to the Zoological Society). They were to be exhibited at a meeting of which Mr. Lynne received due warning, and this attraction, combined with that of the above-mentioned star, made him resolve that his annual removal to Cavendish Square should take place not later than the 1st of April.

But poor Mrs. Lynne felt very unfit to face the atmospheric vicissitudes of hot rooms and cold streets, to say nothing of the nervous excitement which she always underwent at such exhibitions ; therefore, it occurred to her that she might be allowed to revolutionise a few days of her life, and pay a visit to her second son at the Rectory of St. Quentin's. She demurred a little at the thought of all the perils of the rail and road, and a perfect phantasmagoria of uncivil guards, drunken porters, and mad passengers rose before her fancy ; but the thought of Wilfred at the end sustained her, as did also

many visions of Norneley Manor, and of the lovely face of Lilian. Her husband and daughter kindly permitted her to indulge her wish, and it was arranged that she should proceed to —shire on the day of the family removal, and rejoin them in London at the conclusion of her visit.

Great was the event, and great the preparations. Wilfred was written to ; if it had been possible, a seat would have been engaged a week beforehand in the train. A cottage bonnet, and a pair of what Mrs. Lynne believed to be thick boots were purchased, together with several pounds of homœopathic cocoa, a box of rusks, and a bale of linen, as presents for Wilfred. Nor was Lilian forgotten. The stair carpet, in completed splendour, duly bordered with Utrecht velvet of vivid purple, lay coiled in a vast package, directed in letters an inch long to “Viscountess Rossendale,” for, as Mrs. Lynne sagaciously observed, “It will be safer with her name on it than mine, which nobody knows ; and how well it will look on a stone staircase, or even on oak, or—” but we need not follow

the train of reflections which ensued, rivalling in length their origin, the carpet.

She arrived at her son's house on a fine April evening, after a perfectly prosperous and unadventurous journey ; which, however, did not impress her as such, as may be seen from the following letter, written on the evening of her arrival.

“ At last, my dearest Barbara, I am safe at dear Wilfred's charming home, after a really dreadful journey. Barbara, I never will travel by myself again—indeed, I do not think it is safe ; and I wish I had thought of taking Benson with me, instead of sending her in a second-class carriage, where she might as well not have been in the train at all for any use or comfort she was to me. I got into a coupé, hoping to be alone ; but sitting there, I began to think how *dreadful* it would be if the train were to *stop* in a tunnel, or do anything extraordinary, to have no one to speak to ; so I was quite pleased when two gentlemen got in, just as the train was starting—a *very wrong thing*

to do. But one of the gentlemen was so beautifully dressed that I am sure he was a pick-pocket, though at the same time he had a *look* of *dear* Fred ; and there was something not quite comfortable about the other, that made me fear he was not right in his mind ; and I was *miserable*, remembering a dreadful story in a newspaper. But I was soon relieved when I found that he had a Bradshaw, and could use it ; for anybody who can do *that* must have a very clear head and sound judgment.

“ Then I had a terrible shock at one of the stations where we stopped. I saw the men pushing a goods-train on one of those side lines, and I am *convinced* that I saw it standing on our line as we came up ; so think of the escape we had ! Really, I never will travel alone again ! It was a perfect mercy that I got out at the right station, for the man who cried out ‘ St. Quentin’s Road !’ made one syllable of it, so that no one could understand ; but Benson got out and came for me, and then I was quite safe and happy, or would have been, only that all the luggage was upon my mind. But *dear*

Wilfred met me with a fly, and settled everything for me, so nicely and kindly. I could not have believed he could be so *business-like*. And we had such a pleasant drive to his house —such a lovely little place, Barbara, with quantities of spring flowers, and the prettiest furniture, though I think there might be a little more of it; there is not a footstool in the house. Wilfred looks so well, and was so glad to see me; it made me happier than you can imagine, though I am sorry to be away from your dear father, and you, Barbara. I write this in my room before going to bed, and I am so tired after my dreadful journey, that I must conclude. Give my best love to *dearest* Harry, if you should see him soon, and to your father. To-morrow I will write you all about Norneley.

“Your most affectionate mother,

“JANE LYNNE.”

Mrs. Lynne did indeed thoroughly enjoy her visit to her son. She threw herself at once into all his domestic concerns with the pro-

foundest interest, but so kindly and approvingly, that the housemaid's feelings were scarcely hurt, and even the cook forgave. She commended the simple country fare which he daily ordered for her, remembering all her little fancies about food. She never wearied of admiring his violets, his budding laburnums, his emerald lawn (how unlike the turf of Regency Square!), and the many evident beauties of the locality.

But I could not describe her raptures on visiting Lilian, nor her enjoyment of the first evening which she and Wilfred spent at Norneley. They dined there the day after her arrival. Lilian good-naturedly asked no other guests, knowing how much her aunt would enjoy a *tête-à-tête*; and it was pleasant to see them after dinner, plunged each in an arm-chair, the aunt leaning eagerly forwards towards her beautiful niece, who reclined with her usual indolent grace, talking quietly in reply to Mrs. Lynne's many questions—Teagh “connecting the figures,” as an artist would say, by lying full length between them, its head resting on the purple velvet of Lilian's dress, and its

tail extended over the black folds of Mrs. Lynne's, who, after a few moments of terror, had become reconciled to the creature's presence.

"Now, my dear child," said Mrs. Lynne, "tell me everything you do—tell me how you pass your time in this lovely home of yours?"

"Well, the days are not quite alike," said Lilian. "Sometimes we have a good many people staying in the house, and then I drive, or play billiards, or get up riding parties; and sometimes we are quite alone, and then I don't do much. I ride to the meet pretty often, and sometimes go a little way with the hounds."

"The hounds! My dear Lilian, you don't mean hunting?"

Lilian laughed.

"I assure you, Aunt Jane, it's nothing wonderful. I don't ride hard, you know. A great many people do it."

"Well, you know best, of course; and if Lord Rossendale likes it, it's all right. But I

can't help thinking it's rather dangerous, and I should not like to see the poor deer, or hare, or fox—which is it, Lilian?"

"Fox!" said Lilian, laughing.

"Well, I should not like to see the poor fox tormented. But tell me, Lilian, shall you not be sorry to leave home and go to London next month? May in the country must be delightful!"

"I could not be sorry to go to London," Lilian replied; "and we have been here so long, I shall be glad of a little change. Besides, I shall meet mamma and Alice—they are to be there next week, I rather look forward to going out with Alice."

"Just as I look forward to meeting dear Fred and his wife. Only think, Lilian, I have never seen her yet. They went abroad, you know. I was dreadfully shocked about that affair at first, and your uncle was extremely annoyed; but, after all, it don't signify now."

"Not in the least," said Lilian. "Florella is a nice little thing, I believe; and they suit each other."

"And that's everything," observed Mrs. Lynne. "I shall be glad to make acquaintance with her sisters while I am here."

"So you shall," said Lilian. "I will drive you to Leventon Court in my pony-carriage, Aunt Jane. I must show you my turn-out—not Shetland ponies, you know, but two beautiful little thorough-breds—quite perfect in their way—little race-horses, in fact."

"I only hope you can manage them, my dear. I am a little afraid of 'turn-outs.' Lady Thomasina Flare has one at Brighton, and met with a dreadful accident the other day. She was 'turned out' herself."

Mrs. Lynne beamed all over with smiles, in her proud consciousness of having made a sort of joke, and Lilian laughingly assured her of the safety of the carriage and the excellence of her own driving.

Lilian was justified in doing so, for she had become one of those women who seem to possess some mysterious command over everything equine. The wild ponies, which her groom could scarcely drive, never, under her

management, varied their steady speed. Her black mare, Sultana, spirited as she was, was now often exchanged for some young, half-untrained member of Lord Rossendale's stud, which only Lilian and its master could subdue. He was proud of this power of hers—she possessed it in common with him—and he liked to attribute it entirely to his instructions. By means of it, she overcame his objections to her appearance in the hunting-field; and she was now often to be seen following him, or keeping at his side, in the “first flight” through all the various perils of a run. He liked her to keep near him—it prevented her becoming the subject of the many unpleasing remarks generally suggested by hunting-ladies—and it pleased him to see the admiring glances bestowed by friends and strangers on the pair.

No wonder that Lilian should be admired. Nothing could be more fancifully lovely than her whole appearance, especially when she rode Sultana. It was really beautiful to watch the group. The horse, black as night, skimming over the turf, scarcely seeming conscious of the

weight of its graceful rider—her black plume streaming in the wind, and the light flashing upwards, as she passed, from her radiant eyes and the smooth bands of her golden hair. Graceful in all things, in this she was more than graceful. Her riding was the poetry of motion. She would have won the hearts of half the field were it not for her husband's stern, though very wise decree, which kept her at his side. And she was contented, for, to do her justice, she thought more of her own enjoyment than of the admiration she received. No man ever felt the influence of the spirit of the chase more keenly than Lady Rossendale did on these occasions—she had no other feeling at the time. It is generally so. When a woman adopts a man's pursuit, she does it femininely; and, as Byron tells us, “femininely meaneth furiously.”

But Lilian did not shock her good aunt by relating her feats in the hunting-field. She suited her conversation, as much as possible, to the tastes and prejudices of her companion, who went home to the rectory that evening

charmed with everything, enchanted with Lilian, pleased with Lord Rossendale, and full of admiration for their whole *entourage*. She never saw below the surface of things, and so she concluded that there never was a happier pair than Lilian and her husband. It pleased her, too, to see that Wilfred was completely at his ease with his cousin, and that not a lingering pang remained of the sorrow she had caused him. In this observation, Mrs. Lynne was right.

No child escaped into the fields from factory toil ever enjoyed its interval of light and liberty more than she did her visit to her son. Her cold departed, of course—she had not a care upon her mind; and though she never acknowledged it to herself, she could not but feel more comfortable for the absence of Mr. Lynne's continual contradictions and corrections. Her tongue was free at last—her garrulous, but innocent tongue, so long controlled in a way that many more unruly members never experienced.

She was quite happy. Lilian was very kind to her, and took her to see all the beauties of

the neighbourhood. They called at Leventon Court, and finding no one but Lady Charlotte at home, Mrs. Lynne had the happiness of talking alternately of “dear Fred,” and hearing about “dear Florella,” without being restrained by the presence of the grim sisters her fancy had invented for the occasion.

She and Wilfred also dined several times at Norneley, and met various “delightful people,” as Mrs. Lynne termed all the neighbours with whom she had made acquaintance. She formed the rudiments of an eternal friendship with little Mrs. Lappin—“just what I was at her age,” she said.

Everything and everybody was charming, from Lilian’s talented and magnificent house-keeper to Wilfred’s unpretending housemaid—from Lilian’s terrace, with its balustrade of carved stone, to Wilfred’s lawn, sparkling with early flowers.

Mrs. Lynne was in a terrestrial paradise.

CHAPTER VI.

Who set themselves apart
To watch how prayers are prayed, and sweet hymns
 chanted :
With eyes severe, and criticising heart,
As though some player flawed the acting of his part.

MRS. NORTON.

MEANWHILE, Mr. Lynne and Barbara were enjoying themselves after their fashion in the gloomy house in Cavendish Square, occasionally visited by Harry, who was beginning to cause his father some misgivings — not that he showed any signs of treading in Fred's steps — but Mr. Lynne could not disguise from himself that his favourite son, though grave, was not “serious,” though steady, was not “awakened;”

yet Mr. Lynne was resolute in hoping the best for a son who was neither “worldly,” like Frederick, nor “Tractarian,” like Wilfred. How little Mr. Lynne knew the meaning of his own words! As if there could be no worldliness except the love of frivolous pleasure! As if he that followed not the Geneva school of divinity must necessarily adopt that of Oxford!

No change was made in his determination that Harry should take holy orders—this was a fixed plan. Perhaps neither father nor son had ever read the ordination service—perhaps the former would have disapproved of it if he had, for he was one of those who would gladly “revise the Liturgy”—but he would not make his son a Dissenting minister, although he gave his strongest (theological) sympathies to many sectarian bodies. The position was not so respectable as that of an orthodox divine; in short (though Mr. Lynne never stated the proposition to himself in so many words), it had not the same worldly advantages.

He was much pleased with Wilfred’s present

circumstances, and liked to think of him as "my son, the Rector of St. Quentin's." But he feared that the "fanciful notions" he so greatly deprecated would grow and flourish more than ever, now that a wider field was given them. He talked the matter over with his daughter, and they both agreed on the expediency of paying Wilfred a flying visit at the rectory. They could spend a day very profitably in discovering and combating Wilfred's opinions, and they could then give Mrs. Lynne safe conduct back to London, which they well knew was an attention she would appreciate.

Accordingly, they both arrived at Wilfred's house on a fine spring afternoon, not many hours after the letter which announced their intended visit. It was rather a shock to Mrs. Lynne to find her interval of liberty so abruptly ended, but she believed herself to be enchanted at seeing her husband and daughter; and Wilfred received them cordially, with something like a touch of innocent pride at receiving both his parents under his own roof. Wilfred had

his mother's simple nature without her intellectual mediocrity.

They all dined together at the most inconvenient of hours—five o'clock. At this time, and no other, Mr. Lynne delighted to dine, and Wilfred would have all things according to his father's pleasure while he remained with him. It was rather difficult to know what to do with the long evening that followed. Wilfred proposed a twilight walk in vain. It was too damp for Mrs. Lynne, too late for Barbara. Knitting and plain work were produced, and conversation became imminent — there was nothing else to be done.

For some time, they talked of things, not thoughts. Family matters were discussed, and news was interchanged ; but these subjects could not last for ever—not even till tea-time. A pause ensued, soon broken by Mr. Lynne's resonant voice, as he uttered these words :

“ I am glad, Wilfred, that we timed our visit as we did. To-morrow being Sunday, I hope to hear you preach.”

“ Oh yes !” cried Mrs. Lynne, enthu-

siastically, "you will find that a pleasure indeed, James. Dear Wilfred's sermon last Sunday was quite delightful, only too short."

"Too short!" repeated Mr. Lynne. "I trust, Wilfred, you are not indolent in this matter. I trust you do not curtail this most important part of your duty, merely because you find it the most laborious."

"No, father," replied Wilfred, firmly. "I do not think I spare myself, little as I do compared to what I ought. I endeavour, in my sermons, to express myself as concisely as possible, and not to tax the attention of my congregation too long after so much time spent in prayer."

"Tax the attention of your congregation, Wilfred!" said Barbara. "Every one can attend to a sermon if it is well preached. At all events, I shall have no difficulty in attending to yours to-morrow, however long it may be."

"Nor I," said her father. "I am anxious to hear and judge."

Although the words came from his father's

lips, Wilfred could not help mentally answering them with good old Herbert's line :

“ Judge not the preacher, for he is thy judge ;”

but he only said :

“ I trust, Sir, you will not think me unfaithful to my duties from anything you may observe.”

“ No, indeed,” said Mrs. Lynne ; “ Wilfred is more active than anybody. He has scarcely a minute to himself—always among the poor, or in the school-house, or at church, or teaching his singing-class, or preparing his sermons. Indeed, Wilfred neglects nothing, except, perhaps, his own health,” the mother added, with a sigh.

“ I never saw him looking better,” observed Barbara ; while Mr. Lynne coldly remarked, that duties might be very well performed in a bad spirit, but that he hoped this was not the case with Wilfred.

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of tea. It was carried in by a beautiful girl, whom the reader will presently recog-

nise, assisted by a little boy of about twelve years old, not in buttons, but neatly dressed in no particular livery.

“Bessy,” said Wilfred, “bring some more cream, if you please. Barbara, I know you like cream; and here it is not made of snails.”

The servant-girl looked up on receiving her master’s order, and for a moment the virtuous eyes of Barbara met the timid glance of her fallen, but now rescued sister.

Sister!—that tender word of kinship, is too little remembered by women in their dealings with each other. Barbara Lynne would have recoiled from the idea of sisterhood with Bessy Williams had she known her history. But she was struck with the young girl’s beauty, and asked Wilfred where she came from.

“She is the daughter of one of my poor people in London,” he replied. “I have taken her into my service.”

“She looks very neat and quiet,” observed Barbara. “I hope she was well recommended to you. I am sure, Wilfred, you don’t know

how to engage servants. You should always inquire into their former history before you have anything to say to them. But that girl looks respectable, I think."

"She is too good-looking," said Mr. Lynne. "I would not have such an attractive servant. Living so near the village, she must be exposed to all the evils of receiving idle admiration and attentions."

"She is safe here," replied Wilfred, gravely. "My housekeeper is old and trustworthy, and takes great care of Bessy, whose antecedents are well known to me. She never goes to the village, and is not exposed to much admiration here, for that boy you have just seen is the nearest approach to a man-servant living in the house."

"The household of a Christian minister," said Mr. Lynne, "ought to be selected from those whose character and circumstances render them most likely to preserve that Christian respectability which is expected from such an establishment."

"And I don't think," added Barbara, "that

it looks very clerical to be waited on by a handsome girl and a little page."

All this was no more than Wilfred expected from his rigid relatives, so he was resigned. There was no hope that Barbara would ever look upon his as a model establishment, for it was formed without consulting her. Yet was it formed on a principle, and that the highest—the love principle—one which suffices for the noblest deeds of heroism, and yet suggests the most trifling details of common life, where it is consulted ; but this is too seldom done.

But Wilfred never lost sight of this, his rule of life. It guided him entirely in the selection of his little corps of servants. He chose them principally with a view to their own good, more than his advantage : and young as he was, there was something fatherly, or rather patriarchal, in his relations with every member of his little household. He had retained the old gardener, and elderly, but still active groom, who had for years served his predecessor. His housekeeper had been one of his London poor—a widow of excellent character, who had seen better days,

and who had sunk beneath a succession of misfortunes into the respectable poverty of an almshouse, from whence Wilfred raised her to her present position.

Bessy Williams, the reader will have recognised as the “unfortunate” girl whom Wilfred had seen at the house of her sullen mother, and saved from deeper ruin. From the day he met her there, he contrived to keep her honestly employed, with her sister, in needlework; he saw her frequently, and by degrees his gentle teachings found their way through all the corruption that defiled her spirit’s surface. He watched over her, guarded her from evil influences, interested the kind and pious of her own class in her behalf, and at length had his reward in seeing her mind shake off its pollution, and her spirit rise purified and regenerated from the foul darkness in which it had slept so long. She was but a child after all—scarcely sixteen, and the shadow upon her soul had not had time to deepen to a stain.

He discovered, on inquiring from the mother, that the poor child had never received the rite

of baptism, which he accordingly administered when, after long and careful instruction, he discerned that her “hearty repentance” had borne fruit, and could indeed hope that the Holy Spirit had brought purity and faith into her new-found soul. With all her guilt, she was one of those in whom there is no guile, and Wilfred knew how true and strong were her intentions when he heard her speak at the font her own baptismal vows, and bade her receive on her hitherto unhallowed brow, the Holy Sign, which seemed henceforth to mark it free from shame. Wilfred regarded her as a pure and stainless child once more, after the “mystical washing away of sin;” and though the irrevocable past would tinge with sadness all that remained to her of life, her spirit was of those that shall one day stand robed in white among the saints and martyrs.

Wilfred eagerly availed himself of the opportunity of taking her to a purer atmosphere, which offered itself on his appointment to the rectory; and he placed her at once under the charge of the housekeeper I have mentioned, not concealing

her past history from that kind and discreet person, who had not all the prejudices of her sex and class.

The boy whom Barbara dignified by the name of page was no other than young Ramsey, whose health became quite restored on the removal of the family to Lord Rossendale's new lodge, and whom Wilfred took into his service immediately on arriving at the rectory.

Of such members was Wilfred's household composed. Barbara would have thought it singularly ill-selected, had she known all; still Wilfred was faithfully, though perhaps not cleverly, served.

She had an opportunity of reviewing the party when they all entered for evening prayers, and also of passing judgment on the form and manner of worship selected by her brother for this domestic service. Mr. Lynne, too, I fear, was more occupied in observing than in taking his part in what was going forward. Wilfred commenced by reading the second lesson for the evening, after which all knelt while he recited a few suitable collects from the

prayer-book ; they then rose, and sung the “ Nunc Dimittis ” to the solemn, antique music known as the Gregorian Chant, Wilfred taking the tenor, the old gardener supplying an efficient bass, and Bessy Williams and the boy sustaining the melody. Barbara (who could sing hymns very well) was silent. Mr. Lynne had not the faintest discrimination of musical sounds, and therefore was silent too ; while an occasional quaver was heard to emanate from Mrs. Lynne by those who stood close to her.

The service over, Mr. Lynne immediately said :

“ Is this the way in which you always conduct your evening prayers, Wilfred ? ”

“ Not exactly,” he replied. “ I read different collects, and we often sing the ‘ Magnificat,’ or other hymns, instead of the ‘ Nunc Dimittis.’ ”

“ That’s no variety,” said Barbara ; “ and I cannot say I like that monotonous, drawling, monkish chanting—a tune with only three notes in it ! ”

“ Nothing can be simpler than the melody,” said Wilfred, “ and that is its great advantage ;

every one can sing it, and yet it is a sublime strain."

"Sublime!" cried Barbara, scornfully, "that old tune, without beginning, middle, or end!"

"Very true, my dear," interposed Mrs. Lynne. "It does not come to a finish, somehow."

"It does not conclude on the key-note," said Wilfred. "Very old music seldom does; and I cannot tell you how much my ear is pleased by this ending on the third. It is so suited to sacred, or rather, devotional music; it symbolises, I think, the infinitude of its subject, the continuance of the act of worship in our own souls, the truth that there is no final note to the harmonies in which our spirits should ever bear a part; besides, I fancy that the strain lingers on the ear with a strange, haunting mysterious sweetness, when the note with which we expect it to conclude remains unuttered."

"Oh, Wilfred, what nonsense!" exclaimed Barbara. "Why, there is scarcely an Irish jig

or Scotch reel that has not the same sublime peculiarity."

"Very true, my dear," said Mrs. Lynne.

"So they have, Barbara," replied Wilfred, "and it gives them a sort of wild beauty; but I only spoke of the principle as applied to devotional music; its being applicable to jigs and reels does not alter the truth of a word I have said."

"Truth!" groaned Mr. Lynne. "Do you apply the name of truth to these musical technicalities, to which you seem to attach such unaccountable importance, and which to me are simply incomprehensible! Oh, Wilfred! there is something shocking in thus mixing religion with such frivolities, to say that infinitude is symbolised by a note of music. Let me see more vital piety, and less of this unmeaning formalism! Wilfred, do you think your evening prayers ought to have been such as to suggest such a conversation as I have just heard?"

"My dear father, I do not see why a few

words about sacred music should not follow our evening devotions."

Mrs. Lynne looked in bewildered despair, alternately at her husband and her son.

"Wilfred must be in the wrong," she thought, with sorrow.

"I grieve to see these Tractarian delusions extending themselves into my family," said Mr. Lynne. "There can be no vital piety where they exist."

"Oh, James!" murmured his wife.

"Then I suppose," interposed Barbara, in her most sarcastic accents, "to-morrow we shall hear you intone the service, and chant everything that can be chanted; after which you will preach in a surplice, taking your text from the writings of the fathers, and inculcating in your discourse the necessity of holding correct opinions on the subjects of music and painting, to be followed by—I think you call it the Offertory Service—by candlelight."

"Oh, Barbara!" said Mrs. Lynne.

"I trust I shall behold no such lamentable exhibition," Mr. Lynne remarked.

“No,” said Wilfred. “Barbara misjudges me, I think: I do not intone the service; the daily psalms are not chanted in my church; I do not wear the surplice in the pulpit, nor thence deliver lectures on the arts; and though the Offertory Service succeeds the sermon, I do not read it by candlelight. I assure you, my dear father, I am no Tractarian.”

“I wish I could look upon you as a truly settled and experienced Christian,” said Mr. Lynne. “I trust your sermon to-morrow may give some evidence of vital religion; at present I cannot understand your doctrines. You tell me you are no Tractarian, yet I cannot but see Romanising tendencies in the importance you seem to attach to certain forms.”

“If you mean my applying the hymns and prayers of the Church to my domestic services,” Wilfred replied, “I do so because I know of none better suited to the purpose. I can think of no request, no thanksgiving which we can wish daily and nightly to utter, that is not expressed in the prayer-book, in language the most beautiful and full of meaning of which our

English tongue is capable. And the hymns we sing are the very words of Scripture."

"Ah! but I should like one or two of the Olney Hymns sometimes, for a change," said Mrs. Lynne; but no one noticed her remark.

"That blind adherence to the prayer-book is Romanising," Mr. Lynne said. "I conclude you do not allow your parishioners to exercise their private judgment on the Bible, which you probably make second to the prayer-book. You refer them, of course, to the Church."

"In this matter," Wilfred replied, "my principles are as far removed from those of ultra-Tractarians as you could wish. I do not refer any one to the Church for an interpretation of the Bible; the Church has never assumed the office of interpreter. She has authorized no notes or comments on Holy Writ. I leave the Bible to each man's private judgment, and I urge upon all the duty of reading and studying it, as freely and as strongly as you could desire."

"That is satisfactory," said Mr. Lynne. "I am pleased to hear this from you."

“ Oh, really, James,” interposed his wife, “ Wilfred does his very best; he reads the Bible continually among the poor, and distributes them to those who have none. No one can say that he keeps the Scripture in the background. I am so glad, James, that you are satisfied on this point !”

But Barbara, who had a mania for hunting out and exposing what she conceived to be error, was determined to sift the matter thoroughly.

“ But, Wilfred,” she said, “ a clergyman is expected to explain the Scriptures to the ignorant, and enlighten them in any difficulties that may occur to them. There are many passages which you Oxford divines wrest into strange doctrines. Although you don’t refer your parishioners to the Church for explanation, you may perhaps do worse by persuading them that Puseyism is sanctioned by Scripture.”

“ You would not suspect me, Barbara,” Wilfred replied, “ if you were to hear my instructions, such as they are. I assure you, you cannot be more adverse to Tractarian error than

I am myself. I do not think you will ever hear me mention either the prayer-book or the fathers, greatly as I reverence both, to my parishioners when they apply to me for help to understand portions of Scripture."

"Well, I cannot make you out," said Barbara. "You seem to me full of inconsistencies."

"I shall suspend my judgment," said Mr. Lynne.

"It's getting very late," Mrs. Lynne gently insinuated; whereupon the little party broke up, and all retired for the night.

CHAPTER VII.

Two worlds are ours : 'tis only sin
Forbids us to descry
The mystic heaven and earth within,
Plain as the sea and sky.

KEBLE.

THE moment to which Mr. Lynne had so long looked forward came at last. He saw his son ascend the pulpit, and leaning forward, his chin resting on his hand, his lips compressed, and eyes fixed upon Wilfred's countenance, he disposed himself to listen and judge. His daughter sat beside him in one of her most rigid attitudes, her Bible in her hand, ready to find the text ; and Mrs. Lynne leant back, her eyes wandering among the intricacies of the church's

open roof, while her whole form and countenance expressed something more than her usual passive happiness, now heightened by maternal pride, though disturbed at the same time by an occasional twinge of fear lest perhaps “James and Barbara might not quite approve.”

Wilfred gave out his text. “And God saw everything that He had made: and behold it was very good.” He then quietly, but very emphatically, read his sermon. His manner, and his earnest voice, never monotonous, although never rising to a shriek or sinking to a groan, commanded the attention of his hearers; and his forcible, but always concise language, was calculated to bring truth home to the minds of those who would reject her if she were to present herself to them enveloped in a mist of words. His subject was a vast and solemn one. He unfolded to his hearers the marvellous story of creation: how that glorious essence, light, first of all things flashed into being at the fiat of the Deity; how the pregnant earth broke from her shrouding waters, and clothed herself in verdure; how sunshine and

moonlight first lit into beauty the lone and lifeless plains ; how teeming nature burst into lavish life, peopling each element with enjoying creatures ; and lastly, how, under the Creator's plastic power, those elements combined into the form of man, the fitting recipient for the breath of life, or divine influx, by which he, creation's viceroy, lives, and moves, and has his being.

Then Wilfred spoke of the glorious beauty and deep meaning of that complex creation, which God pronounced " very good ;" he bade them read the truths, written in symbols on the spotless pages of that first volume of revelation, the book of nature ; he bade them look reverently on the innocent, obedient, unfallen world around them, still very good, although now man, its dethroned monarch, can see its true loveliness no longer, nor join in its constant anthem. To him, the fallen spirit, the whole creation groaneth ; for him, the wild briar and the thistle fulfil a curse ; he stands armed against the lion, his inferior fellow-creature, and with blows, or long generations of slavery, he

forces obedience from his vassal horse and ox. He is exotic to nature. Her laws are not his laws, her “open secret” he cannot read, her blind obedience, her sinless purity, her unerring fulfilment of every divine law she has received, are not for him to follow. He is under another rule, fallen from his first estate. Eden is still in the world, Eden is in every spot where the sun can shine or the grasses grow, but man is an exile still. For him there is no Eden. The flaming sword which turneth every way, still burns between him and his sinless Paradise.

All this, and more, Wilfred told his hearers. He showed them man’s position as a free, but fallen spirit, cursed with the knowledge of good and evil ; alone, among God’s creatures, the sole rebellious one ; his once pure instincts falsified, his will distorted into evil, his understanding darkened, his spirit blinded to the truths written in letters of light upon all surrounding things, himself the one chord on the lyre of creation that mars the melody of all—the only tuneless one.

Then Wilfred showed them how, in this new chaos of man’s nature, the six days’ work could

be again accomplished ; how the same Spirit now broods over the cold, dark waters of human knowledge, and truth flashes upon the soul, at the Creator's word ; how the conscious spirit sees in that inexorable light its own deformity, and then receives from Heaven the first faint germ of life and beauty, bringing forth feeble manifestations of its kindling love—low, weak acts, but still fruitful, still bearing seed, and fair in their prone humility, till a greater change ensues.

“ Let there be light !” God had said, and the darkness had rolled away from the soul ; but now faith is added to light, the sun appears in man's firmament. The divine love flows down in conscious warmth upon the soul, the divine wisdom enlightens it, and man looks up to God, recognising the source of both, the spiritual sun, the greater light, to rule the day. But the fallen though regenerate spirit cannot brook the constant noonday of splendour ; in its merciful alternations of night, it needs a lesser light. Revelation is granted. The word of God, the mystic writings of inspired souls,

who reflect on us the pure but softened sunlight ; and these received, the enlightened and enkindled spirit teems with living acts, living desires, embodied loves, differing, yet all in harmony : the lion of his passions calm beside the lamb of his meek humility, his serpent-like wisdom pure as his infantine innocence ; till man regenerate becomes a finished work, and entering the Sabbath of eternity, is pronounced by his Creator “ Very good.”

Thus Wilfred declared to his congregation the three states of man—perfect, fallen, and regenerate ; and then drawing, as I have briefly sketched, the parallel between the natural creation, and the re-creation or regeneration of man’s soul, he brought his discourse to a conclusion, announcing his purpose of continuing the subject in the afternoon, and of pointing out the necessity and nature of the Atonement, and human incarnation of the deity.

Then his sermon ended, and with the Offer-tory the morning service concluded. Wilfred remained to collect and distribute the alms, while his parents and sister accompanied the

Rossendales home to luncheon, as had been previously arranged. Wilfred joined them shortly after their arrival, but not till they had found time for a few words about his sermon. Mrs. Lynne spoke last, and said she could not pretend to judge. If she had spoken first, and had not feared to express her thought, she would have said that the sermon was quite beautiful, and that she understood it perfectly ; for, strange to say, those broad truths are best understood for the moment by the simplest intellects, which, however, can be easily perplexed into relinquishing them. Mr. Lynne condemned the discourse as fanciful, although he could not say it was Tractarian ; and Barbara said that Wilfred's sermon might be very clever, but he certainly did not preach the Gospel. She did not know that all abstract truth is Gospel, or God's good tidings. Lilian said nothing—she hated talking about sermons ; and Lord Rossendale had nothing to say on the subject ; so he changed it, and a common-place conversation sprung up, and lasted for the remainder of the walk. Lilian disliked her

uncle and cousin, and left them to Lord Rossendale, while she walked beside her aunt, who prattled pleasantly enough.

Here it may be noticed that Lilian never exerted herself to talk to those whose conversation did not please her, or who did not appreciate hers ; so that, as long as they were together, the whole weight of Mr. Lynne and Barbara fell upon Lord Rossendale. Lilian occasionally addressed her cousin, and received a short reply ; but they had no conversation. To her aunt she talked fast and freely, principally of the delights of going to London, of taking Alice out, of driving her ponies in the park, &c. They had taken a house near Mrs. Clinton's, and the time of their departure was fixed for the first week in May.

“ Those old thorns will be in great beauty when you leave them,” Mrs. Lynne remarked.

“ Oh ! I shall see the thorns at The Hazels,” Lilian replied. “ I mean to make mamma give a breakfast there. Will it not be charming !”

“ Very nice,” replied Mrs. Lynne. “ I hope you will have water-lilies in your bonnet, as you

had last year. Wilfred, my dear, it can't be time to go to church again?" she added, seeing him take his hat and rise.

"Just time, if we walk slowly," he replied. And Mrs. Lynne obediently tied her bonnet, and rose, followed by the rest of the party.

Afternoon service over, Lilian and Lord Rossendale bade farewell to their relatives, who were to leave the rectory early the next day. Lilian was very sorry for her aunt's departure. She had been made much of by that affectionate relative, and the fortnight she had yet to pass at Norneley seemed drearier than ever now.

The next morning came—the last hour of Mrs. Lynne's happy visit. She sighed deeply over her final slice of country bread-and-butter, and still more sadly gasped as she decorated herself for the last time with the bunch of violets which Wilfred, according to his usual custom, had laid beside her plate. But she was cheered by the arrival of a letter from Frederick, which Wilfred put into her hand.

In it Fred announced to his brother that,

through Lord Leventon's interest, he had received a good appointment abroad, which he lucidly described in these terms :

“ I've only just heard it, and don't know what it is, or what I'm expected to do ; but it's worth £500 or £600 a-year, so that, with what I've got, we shall do uncommonly well ; and it's somewhere on the Mediterranean—one of the Ionian Islands, I believe. Florella is delighted, except when Caroline makes her cry about the parting, &c. Old Leventon is very kind, certainly. We go in a month. Tell my mother all about it, with my love, and ask Barbara to make me a pair of slippers, not so dingy as the last.”

This letter threw Mrs. Lynne into a state of such excitement as completely to submerge her sorrow at leaving Wilfred and his violets. Nothing was now to be thought of but dear Fred and his prospects.

Barbara bore magnanimously her brother's insult about the slippers, and expressed pleasure at his good fortune, adding that it was well for

him to be taken out of London and given occupation.

Mr. Lynne said he was gratified, but did not look so. He further observed that Frederick was by no means fit for any important situation, but that he trusted the business of this one would not be such as to require much carefulness or punctuality as, if so, it would assuredly suffer.

Mrs. Lynne exclaimed at this severe judgment of her beloved first-born, and declared her conviction that, whatever his office might be, no one would fill it half so well as dear Fred, who could do everything if he only took the trouble ; and she was proceeding to deliver a lengthened eulogy, when Barbara cut her short by remarking that it was quite time to “put on our things, if we don’t mean to miss the train.”

Mrs. Lynne obediently went up-stairs at once. Taking her son’s arm, she drew him into her room, murmuring something about “helping me to put on my cloak ;” and having shut the door, commenced delivering the few last words

over which she had pondered half the night, but whose arrangement in her brain had been sadly disordered by the news of Frederick just received.

“I’m very sorry, my dear Wilfred,” she said, “to leave you, for I’ve had a most delightful visit, and never enjoyed myself more in my life ; and I am so glad your dear father has seen you in your own home, and Barbara, too. But, my dear, I really wish you could agree with them more than you do in some things. I can’t bear to hear your father and Barbara differing from you at all ; and you know, Wilfred, they must be right. Now, dear Fred never differs from his father—perhaps he is not quite so serious as we could wish—but he always agrees with what we say, and has no strange notions at all ; and some of your notions are very strange, Wilfred, my dear !”

“Mother,” said Wilfred, “I trust I do not in essentials differ from any earnest Christian ; but as long as minds and natures vary, views of truth will vary, too. I hope, at all events, that you and my father are convinced that I do not

advocate party spirit in religion, or follow those who attempt to narrow the Church into a system, forgetting that it is Catholic, and therefore neither High nor Low, but wide.”

“ If you mean, my dear, that you are not a Tractarian, I think we are quite satisfied on that point; but I can’t help wishing you were like all the good clergymen I have known. Really, as Barbara says, your establishment is not exactly clerical; and I must say I thought it very odd, yesterday evening, that you should let all the village children into your grounds to play—on a Sunday evening, when one ought to be so quiet. The Sunday before I did not mind it, I know; but Barbara was shocked, and so I thought I would just mention it before I went.”

“ The children do not play on Sunday,” said Wilfred. “ I allow no noisy mirth, but I like to give them, on that holy festival, the benefit of my trees and flowers, and I like having them under my eye.”

“ Well, my dear, I am sure you mean well—only it looks odd—it’s not usual, you know. I

have no doubt you are always sincere, Wilfred ; and, after all, that is everything. Your father and Barbara must think so, I have no doubt. Oh ! I hear Barbara going down-stairs. I hope I am not late.”

And tying her bonnet, she hastened down, the idea of Wilfred’s heterodoxy being banished from her mind by the vision of a railway train on the point of starting.

Wilfred accompanied the party to the railway station, and then returned alone.

We will leave him to his meditations, and follow those of Lord Rossendale as he walks homewards, after paying a visit of inspection to his newly-erected farm steam-engine.

“ What a bore it is having to go to London !” he thought. “ But there’s the House to be attended—and Lilian, she would not hear of anything else. Lilian is really very frivolous in her tastes. She takes no interest in anything rational, and I don’t think she cares for the place. That steam-engine now ! It would interest anybody to see it work, but she thinks of nothing but the noise and the

smell. I wish Mary was here. If Mary lived with us, I should be very happy—she takes such an interest in everything. But I suppose that would not do. I never can have things as I like—there is always something wrong. Here I am now, obliged to go to London ; and when I am here, Lilian don't interest herself in my pursuits. I wonder when everything will be comfortable ! I am afraid Lilian is selfish—one can't be happy with a selfish wife."

Thus musing, he entered his house, and soon found himself in Lilian's presence. She was seated at the piano, idly amusing herself with snatches of song. She rose as he entered, and came towards him with a listless step.

"Where have you been, Henry ? What ! that horrid steam-engine again ? And there's oil on your coat ! Oh, do go and change it !"

"Oil !—where ? Oh, that's nothing ! You should not be so fastidious, Lilian ; it is quite absurd ! What are you about ? You don't seem very much occupied !"

"There is nothing to be done," she answered.
"I am going to ride presently."

“I can’t accompany you, then,” he said. “I have business with my bailiff this afternoon.”

“Oh! I don’t want you, Henry!” she replied. “I shall ride with Wilfred. I heard him say yesterday that he had a visit to pay at the far end of his parish, and I mean to join him, as far as the ride is concerned. I have nothing to say to the visit.”

“Well, do as you like, Lilian,” Lord Rossendale said, turning away; but she called him back.

“Are you going to the stable? Do inquire whether that pony’s foot is getting well. I must have my ponies in good order for London.”

“Your ponies, Lilian? You don’t think of driving them in London, I hope?”

“Certainly I do. They are just fit for the Park. Of course, I mean to drive them. You are not going to object, surely?”

“I do object, Lilian, for many reasons. Your ponies are not quiet enough, and it would be perfectly unsafe to drive them in a crowd—

besides, I do not wish that you should make yourself conspicuous in any way. It would not gratify me that Lady Rossendale's equipage, or anything else about her, should contribute conversation for the London world. You may do what you like *here*."

Lilian was indignant.

"Henry, you are too provoking," she said, colouring with anger. "Am I to be forbidden what every one else is allowed? Are you going to be tyrannical, and prevent all my enjoyment in London, for fear I should be conspicuous? What does it signify, if I am not conspicuous for anything wrong? And I am sure, whatever I do, I shall never be half as conspicuous as many others, whom I never heard you condemn."

"I have nothing to do with others, nor have you, Lilian. I may have peculiar ideas, but I expect my wife to conform to them. That you should be remarked at all, would be annoying to me. I suppose you are quite aware of the beauty which will always make you a point for the eyes of the many. I consider it as an

additional reason why you should strictly avoid anything like eccentricity or display. Lady Rossendale is not to be a London *Lionne*."

Lilian heard the prohibition with increasing anger. It threw down all her hopes of celebrity, for she had lately entertained many visions of future elevation on a pinnacle of fashion. She had expected to dazzle the world with her excellence, her talents, and her beauty, tenfold more as Lady Rossendale than she did as Miss Clinton ; but she now saw that it could never be. Her brilliant marriage had condemned her to obscurity. Her noble husband was but a country farmer after all. And she well knew that he would never relax his iron rule—that a *grand succès* on her part, would be but a signal for withdrawing her from the scene of her triumph. Vexed beyond endurance, she said :

"If I am to be thwarted in this way, I might as well not go to London at all."

"You are too childish," he replied. "Do you think I go to London with the object of giving you or myself those frivolous amuse-

ments which your mother calls ‘ the advantages of society ?’ I go to attend my parliamentary duties, and you will see a great many of your friends and relations, which, I should think, would be quite pleasure enough. You are no longer a young lady, Lilian.”

“ But that is no reason why I should be shut up in this cruel way. And I ought to have the more liberty for being married, like every one else.”

“ This is perfect folly, Lilian,” he said, impatiently interrupting her. “ I am not going to shut you up. You will have quite enough society—but ‘ every one else’ is no precedent to me. I am not so easily satisfied as ‘ every one else’s’ husband may be. But there is no occasion for your losing your temper, and stamping your foot in that extremely absurd manner. I have only said that you are not to be a Lionne, and that your ponies are to remain here.”

Lilian did not reply, but hung her head like a thwarted child, while Lord Rossendale slowly and deliberately left the room. She then threw

herself on the sofa, and still more childishly spent a few minutes in fretful crying. They might have lengthened to an hour, but she heard a step in the gallery—a lighter step than Henry's—and in a moment Wilfred was by her side.

She sprang up with a smile which did not deceive her cousin; but he took no apparent notice of her disturbed state. Although she smiled, she would have liked Wilfred to have observed that something was amiss, and to have shown some anxiety as to the cause of her disquietude. In the old familiar manner of their childhood, she laid her hand upon his arm, and invited him to sit beside her on the sofa.

“I hope you are not come to say you won’t ride with me,” she said. “I know you have a distant visit to pay, and I mean to go with you.”

“I came to ask you when you would like to go. I shall be very glad of a companion, for the ride is rather a long one. Shall I call for you here at two o’clock?”

“Very well,” Lilian replied, “I shall be ready. Now don’t get up—do stay a little while, and let us have some music presently.”

“Impossible, Lilian. I have people waiting for me at home, and two or three visits to pay before our ride. I cannot stay another moment.”

And he rose hastily, and departed.

“He might have given me such a pleasant morning,” thought Lilian; “but he never stays. I wonder whether he is really so very busy? At all events, I shall have a ride with him. Poor Wilfred! how good he is, and so kind and gentle always, though there is a firm dignity about him which one would willingly obey. I wish he came here oftener; but I suppose Henry would not like it—Henry likes nothing, I think. How different everything is from what I expected last summer.”

And Lilian threw herself on the sofa again, and spent an hour in repining thought, after which she resorted for consolation to a French novel, which afforded her enjoyment until the hour appointed for her ride.

She talked to Wilfred about old times at The Hazels, recalling many little events of their childhood.

“How very happy we were!” she said, with a sigh. “The worst misfortune that ever befel us in those days was your first going to school. Alice and I cried ourselves to sleep that night. And do you remember, Wilfred, that summer’s day, when you took me in the boat, and told me you meant to be a clergyman; and how we gathered water-lilies, and you said they were like angel’s flowers, and I laughed at you?”

“I remember,” said Wilfred. “Alice did not laugh, I recollect that.”

“It does not seem very long ago,” she continued. “I wish we were children again. I wish those days would return—do not you, Wilfred?”

“No,” he replied, seriously. “No, Lilian, I do not wish to recal even the brightest moments of the past. I have no desire to return to any phase of my younger self. The traveller ascending a mountain would never retrace a

single step, or wish himself lower, when he is striving to reach the summit."

"Ah! but I am not ascending," said Lilian, with a smile in which there was no brightness. "Do you remember the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' Wilfred? Well, I am in some valley, or slough, or rather in the level streets of Vanity Fair. No, I am forbidden that," she added, with a frown. "But, at all events, I am not ascending. No wonder I wish to return to the happy valley of my childhood."

"There is a happier valley on the other side," said Wilfred, "but we must scale the heights to see it."

"As *you* do," she said, earnestly. "But I like to stay among the flowers of life, though, indeed, the thorns and nettles grow thickly among them."

"Urging you to go on," Wilfred said.

"To go on! No, Wilfred; but making me pine to go back—to be a child again—to return to the summer of my life, when cold winds did not blow upon me, when I never

heard a harsh word or met a look of disapproval, when—" and she checked herself for an instant. "But those days are over now, and I suppose I ought to be satisfied."

"There is no such thing as being satisfied with every earthly blessing around us, until we have learnt to look beyond and above them. We are immortals, and cannot be truly satisfied with the things of time."

"Very true," said Lilian, "of course one knows all that, but that is not what I mean. One can be more or less happy in different circumstances, and one naturally wishes to recal those which produced more happiness than the present."

Wilfred plainly saw, notwithstanding the impersonal construction of Lilian's sentences, that she had no wish to conceal from him her present state of discontent—in short, that she was avowedly unhappy. If any spiritual doubts and fears had taken possession of her mind, he would at once have drawn them to the light, and endeavoured to disperse them; but he would hear no confessions, no statements of the cir-

cumstances to which Lilian attributed her disturbance. They rode a little way in silence. At length he observed :

“Circumstances are but the expression of the divine will, and as such we must submit to them. They are always for our true advantage, *always*, whatever we may imagine in our short-sighted impatience and erring judgment. They only help us up the hill that we were talking of.”

“I hope it is all for the best in the end,” she said. “But meanwhile one would like a little enjoyment. Is this cottage your destination?” Wilfred had pulled up his horse and was dismounting. “Don’t stay very long. I will ride on to the milestone, and come back.”

She rode forward very slowly, thinking of her own and Wilfred’s words.

“How I wish he understood me!” she said to herself. “He *could* sympathise with me, I know. Everything he says is very good, and very true, but it don’t apply to my case; yet if he liked, Wilfred might be just the friend I want. I must have a friend. Henry never

will understand me. It is too bad of him to talk to me as he does about what I am to do and not to do. Am I to have no more pleasure, I wonder?"

From that hour the beautiful and fascinating Lady Rossendale, added to her many charms that of being a *femme incomprise*.

She continued her discontented musings, riding slowly forward, until she had passed the milestone by many yards, and had mentally turned every circumstance of her position to a grievance. A turn of the road soon shewed her how much she had exceeded the appointed distance, and turning round, she cantered back, her horse's speed accelerated by more than one impatient shake of the reins.

Wilfred rejoined her, and on their way home, he tried hard to draw her into a conversation about the condition of the poor, and proposed to her several plans for its amelioration, in which he wished her to co-operate. But she was evidently preoccupied, and had little to say, always referring him to her husband, for any information or assistance he required. Her

own condition, her own privations, were all she could think of then.

“Wilfred,” she said, in a low, earnest voice, as they slowly passed between the fine old limes that formed the avenue of Norneley. “Wilfred, won’t you come to see me as often as you can? I shall only be here a week longer.”

“We are not very far apart,” he replied. “We shall meet occasionally before you go; but you know, *Lilian*, I have not any time to spare; my visiting circle is very great, and I cannot extend it to my aristocratic friends, who need me much less than others; but whenever you are kind enough to accompany my rides, we can have some pleasant talk.”

“Oh, Wilfred, it is not only the poor that need such a friend as you.”

“Well, *Lilian*, I have been *your* friend for many years, you know; but the poor require my visits in a different way, and more than you can do.”

“How little you know, Wilfred! how little you know *my* needs!” And *Lilian*’s head drooped, and tear after tear fell over the waving

mane of her horse. She had worked herself up to a state beyond her small powers of self-control.

They reached the house in silence.

“God bless you, dear Lilian!” said Wilfred, reverently, as she stood on the steps, and raised her tearful eyes to his. “There may be a little cloud upon your sky just now, for no one’s sky is cloudless; but remember, Lilian, that the sun, the true sun, is always shining. Do not darken it with the world’s torchlight, Lilian.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Love the things that God created,
 Make your brother's need your care :
Scorn and hate repel God's blessings,
 But where love is, these are there :
As the moonbeams light the waters,
 Leaving rock and sandbank bare.

CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY.

LORD and Lady Rossendale went to London, so did Mrs. Clinton and Alice, so did the world. Most unwillingly I follow them, for the May sunshine is streaming through the tender green of the woods of Norneley, and gleaming on the countless wild flowers that nestle in the under-wood. The forest is a temple for the innocent loves of the birds, and over the sunny moorland

the larks have made a firmament of song. But we must leave all this to Wilfred and the poor, and follow the lord and lady of the soil to the city, though I cannot linger there ; but will briefly record the passing experiences of the two months they spent in voluntary exile from so much beauty.

Lord Rossendale's strictness did not relax in the slightest degree. He had not the smallest sympathy with Lilian's love of pleasure, and his presence became a continual check to her amusement. He never allowed her to go anywhere without him, except when she accompanied her mother and Alice.

The latter was not very strong, and even Mrs. Clinton saw that she could not stand repeated late hours ; while Lilian was very soon stringently prohibited all dissipation, because there were hopes of an heir to Norneley. She was as strong as possible, and as well able to go out as any one else ; but Lord Rossendale thought he could destroy her love of pleasure by starving it, and therefore made her situation a pretext for as much quietness as he could well secure

for her. She kept up a constant pressure against his inflexible will, and now more than ever fretted and chafed at her destiny, silently, always, except with her husband, to whom she made many a stormy speech. She longed for Wilfred's companionship ; to her mother and Alice she would not reveal her discontent, which grew and grew, till it had overspread the whole surface of her mind, for in her then shallow character, even discontent could not be deep-seated.

“ Cannot you be satisfied,” said Lord Rossendale one day to his wife, “ without every variety of amusement ? Cannot you be rational ? See how happy Mary is, without half as much society as you have. Cannot you be like Mary ?”

What an error it is ever to set up one person as a model for another ! We must each be good with a goodness of our own. Lilian’s character, however perfected, could never be like Mrs. Lester’s ; higher or lower, it would still be different. Lilian felt the injustice, and replied in a tone of irritation :

“ Mary and I are as different as possible ; it is very easy for some people to lead that kind of life ; it suits them, and they like it. Mary is free, at any rate, and does what she pleases. I wish I was like her in that.”

“ I wish you were in everything,” said Lord Rosssendale.

And thus the germ of a bitter feeling against her sister-in-law was implanted in Lilian’s mind ; and she was turned against one who might have been to her a true and valued friend.

Meanwhile Alice’s spirits, so long supported by her resolute, self-sacrificing endeavour, began to fail. In tranquil scenes it is possible to be cheerful even when sorrow fills the heart’s depths, but to be cheerful in the midst of gaiety is difficult indeed in such a case. Alice strove hard, but could not do it ; and day by day, in what is called society, she grew more silent and reserved. Yet the world agreed to admire her still. She was considered to be improved in looks, and many fascinations were discovered in her cold, quiet manner and thoughtful eyes.

She seemed less enthusiastic, less child-like than last year; some said she had grown proud, and that her head was turned; others pronounced her a cold, uninteresting character; a few whispered that she nourished an unrequited attachment to a Puseyite cousin, who had taken a vow of celibacy, and that she had renounced the world, and only appeared there at times in obedience to her mother; but almost *all* had something to say about her. She could not pass unnoticed, although it was hard to account for the admiration she received.

Lord Bourneley, with whom she had made acquaintance at Brighton, was what Mrs. Clinton called a very serious admirer of Alice's. He was besides an excellent *parti*, and a good though uninteresting individual. He would have been at Alice's feet, but for her steady discouragement of his advances. She kept him always at a distance; kindly, but very coldly, she repelled every testimony of his affection, and he soon relinquished his hopeless suit. Captain Travers, too, remembering Alice's fortune, tried to ingratiate himself with her, but

was so received that his first trial was his last. He consoled himself by a lively flirtation with Lady Caroline Maraford, which ended by both parties falling in love, and finally marrying, Lord Leventon giving them leave to do so for fear of a second elopement.

Mrs. Clinton was in despair at Alice's cold reserve, which even deprived her of the pleasure of confiding to her friends that Alice had refused Lord Bourneley and Captain Travers ; for Alice had refused no one this season. She took care to spare herself and her lovers this mutually painful process.

One day, Mrs. Clinton lamented thus to Lord Rossendale :

“ Alice has grown so stiff and formal in society, one would almost think she was imitating Barbara—she keeps every one at a distance.”

“ But nothing can be more unlike Miss Lynne,” replied Lord Rossendale. “ Alice is always graceful and gentle, with all her coldness. My belief is, that she is too much attached to Desmond not to dislike every one else a little.”

“Attached to that Irishman! I trust not—indeed, I can’t believe that Alice, always so hard to please, could really care for that man. At any rate, it will not last, for he is safe in Ireland, I hear, and likely to stay there, so how are they to meet?”

“Alice will not forget him, nor will he ever change with regard to her,” was Lord Rossendale’s reply. “Depend upon it, she will not marry any one else. I don’t see the use of making people uncomfortable, Mrs. Clinton; it seems to me you would be quite justified in giving them your consent. Desmond is an excellent fellow, and, after all, Ireland is tolerably accessible.”

But Mrs. Clinton would not hear of it. She could not believe it was so serious, she said; at all events, it was a marriage to which she never could or would agree.

Alice never spoke of Desmond, nor ever ceased to think of him. The image of his wild home, so often described by him, was incessantly before her eyes. In her dreams she found herself listening to the roar of the Atlantic

combined with the low music of his voice, in that home that was never to be hers. She thought of his active, useful life, his given sphere of duty ; and if she repined at all, it was because she could not imitate him. It would have been a happiness, as far as possible, to live like him, to do good, as she knew he did, to dwell, like him, among one's own people, and be to them a providence.

“ Thy people shall be my people,” she had once said to him—this was not to be ; but it would make a spiritual union between those severed hearts if both could work alike, though not together.

But Alice was not called to active duty ; she remembered her lost friend’s words, and recognised that it was still her doom to stand and wait. But she stood watching, never to let an opportunity of good slip by neglected, and though for the time being Alice was a London young lady, she was also an obedient struggler in the warfare of life.

She often accompanied Mrs. Lester in her visits to the poor—at least, as often as her

mother would permit—and two thirds of her ample allowance she expended among them. She was in consequence always very simply dressed, and indulged in very little variety. People were surprised at her simplicity of attire, and many young ladies whose minds and purses were alike strained to make an effective appearance, envied the rich Miss Clinton, and thought how much better they could spend such an allowance, had they the good fortune to possess it. Mrs. Clinton sometimes remonstrated, but as Alice always looked nice, she generally yielded, after a few ungracious words about the folly of buying blankets and penny loaves instead of bonnets and ball-dresses.

The only member of the well-clothed classes who at this time came within the sphere of Alice's benevolence, was her young cousin, Harry Lynne. He was her junior by two months, and on the strength of this slight difference, he laughingly asked Alice to be his Mentor, and prepare him for his future duties. From this sprang many conversations between them, in which at last Alice's earnest intention

penetrated through the crust of worldliness and satirical scorn which mocking demons had laid upon the youth's nature.

He was one of those who saw the ridiculous in everything, who loved to find something to sneer at wherever he turned his eye, who prepared himself to go through life with one long laugh, not of mirth, but bitterness. He valued knowledge, but cared not for wisdom, for that is "gentle and easily entreated." He admired truth, while half denying its existence ; he did not believe in the beautiful. But his was a young heart still, and there was freshness in its depths. Alice grieved to see that worst defiler of moral beauty, the spirit of sarcasm, laying waste the boy's soul, and she armed herself with gentle wisdom against his enemy. They were much together, and under Alice's sweet influences, the Upas-tree in Harry's soul faded and fell.

June came, and on one of its brightest days Mrs. Clinton gave a breakfast at The Hazels. Lilian was enchanted at having gained this point, though she never doubted her success with her mother, unless Lord Rossendale's

strong will cast itself into the opposite balance. On this occasion everything was delightful. It was in every respect a “successful” festivity. Alice enjoyed the beauty of her home, with its blue river and its wilderness of roses, and all admired the spot, and expressed to their graceful hostess the pleasure she had afforded them. Harry Lynne was there, and wonderful to relate, his mother and Barbara also might be found among the festive throng. Mr. Lynne innocently thought there could be no dissipation in a morning party, and therefore infinitely surprised his wife by telling her “she might go to Florence’s house on Thursday if she pleased,” commanding Barbara to accompany her.

Barbara was quite handsome enough to have been among the ornaments of the party, had she known how to appear as such; but, under no circumstances could a drab silk bonnet, white Indian shawl, and dust-coloured flounces, contribute to the brilliancy of a London *déjeuner*, however faultless a form and face they might envelop.

Mrs. Lynne was, on the whole, more ornamental than her daughter. Lilian had presided

at the selection of her toilette for the day, and therefore it was faultless; and the good-natured face that smiled among the dark roses in her bonnet, did not ill-beseem her gay attire.

Harry, too, was there, wandering with Alice among the grassy walks of the shrubberies, talking about his future.

“I go back to Oxford to-morrow,” he said. “They call me a reading-man there, but what idleness it is! I that could work so hard at good, honest work, to be kept wasting my life in preparing for a profession unsuited to my tastes and nature! I could do something in Parliament, I’m sure—I could do something abroad! Why can’t I get something like that foolish Fred’s situation? With me, it would be a step to distinction, with him it is but an excuse for doing nothing. I could work hard in the colonies—I feel that I could do anything far better than what I have to do. Alice, it’s a hard case!”

“Do not undertake such an office, Harry, if you feel unfit for it—it would indeed be a sin.

I think you are certainly much more fit for an active, stirring life than for such a one as Wilfred is now leading."

"Wilfred!—oh, I shall never be like Wilfred!" said the boy, his proud features losing their habitual expression as he spoke; "I could not be like Wilfred!"

"Nor is it required of you," Alice said. "You have other gifts than his. But, Harry, you can be as good and earnest as he is in another line of life."

"Earnest!" repeated Harry. "Well, I begin to think it is in me to be earnest sometimes. After all, there are some things one can't well laugh at!"

"There are few things one *can* laugh at, I think," said Alice, "if one only tries to see into the realities that surround one. It is a sad and bitter thing that men should laugh when angels weep."

"And yet vice and folly are fair objects of ridicule."

"So the world says," replied Alice. "It finds the practice of ridiculing others very

amusing, and therefore the world's idea of doing good lies in ridiculing vice and folly—or rather the vicious and the foolish—our insane brothers, whom we should pity and strive to restore."

"I have a strong sense of the ludicrous," said Harry. "I can't help laughing at people!"

"But don't laugh at that which is not ludicrous in them, but sad and grievous. Don't laugh at the weakness which mars their power for doing good, the sins that stand between them and heaven, the passions that riot in their soul, and keep all good influences shut out. Don't laugh at these, or at their manifestations, for, as I said before, these are the things that make angels weep, if angels can know pain."

The youth was silent for a while.

"I did not know," he said, after a time, "that it was in me to think of such ideas as you suggest. I do not think, after all, I was meant to be a mocker."

"No one is meant to be an evil spirit," said Alice.

“A hard name that, Alice,” said Harry.

“I do not apply it,” she answered; “but I am convinced that nothing would so quickly educate a man into a demon, as encouraging him in the habit of mockery. Do you not see that this evil habit, more than any other, springs from absolute evil and falsity?—from evil, because it involves a total absence of love, which is synonymous with good; and from falsity, because it is altogether based on a false estimate of the things we laugh at. They would be too terrible to excite a smile even in the most loveless mortal, could we but see them as they are.”

“Life is serious after all,” said Harry. “But the truth is, Alice, it rouses something of the demon in me to find myself tied down to a fate at variance with what I feel is my true destiny. I want a career, in short.”

“And you will have a career if it is good for you,” said Alice. “Meanwhile, I should think your father would not persist in his intentions regarding you, if you would speak seriously to him and express your own feelings on the subject.”

“ My father never thinks of people’s feelings,” he answered, with something of his old bitterness. “ He thinks only that, as he knows various dignitaries of the Church, and is a friend of the Archbishop of ——, he has a good deal of interest in that line ; and as I am by way of being his clever son, and withal somewhat ambitious, he hopes to see me a bishop some day—I, that would rather be any adventurer upon earth ! Alice, you do not know how worldly a single-minded Christian can be !”

Alice checked him with a word and a look. The boy’s heightened colour betrayed his consciousness of having yielded to his besetting sin.

Their conversation was now interrupted—each became engaged in lighter talk with another companion ; but Alice’s words lingered in her cousin’s mind. He went to Oxford the next day, and even there they were not forgotten.

This occasion was very nearly the last appearance of Lilian in public—at least, for the present. Lord Rossendale insisted on

going home at the end of the month. There were some farm buildings in process of erection at Norneley, which he was very anxious to inspect: and other country business awaited him. He took a real and great interest in his home, and when there was always occupied, except on days of unusual moroseness, when he would wander idly about his woods and fields. But he had lost all the tastes that had once made him find some small enjoyment in an interval of town life—his duties in the Upper House were now his only source of occupation in London, and they were not very arduous, so that, on the whole, he was very anxious to return home.

Not so Lilian, who was furious at his declining two or three invitations to some gay country houses, which, if accepted, might, she thought, have made the autumn months pass pleasantly enough.

But he would hear of no change in his rigid plans. He had a great deal to do at home, and home he would go, and stay there. In the middle of August, he said, he would have a

party of friends for the grouse-shooting—till then, he should remain quiet. To Lilian's petulantly-urged wishes he paid no regard. If she did not like a quiet country home, she ought to like it, and must get accustomed to it. His wishes were reasonable and good—hers were the reverse—they must yield.

This was not the way to train a recalcitrating wife. Lord Rossendale would have managed a young horse on better principle, giving him his head judiciously; but the fact was, that every wish of Lilian's, if granted, would involve the sacrifice of some wish of his own—and self-denial was undreamt of in Lord Rossendale's philosophy. Therefore, with a self-deception almost universal in this world of falsehood, he dignified his selfishness with the names of high principle and sound judgment, and believed that he was educating and protecting Lilian when he was only indulging himself.

There are many like Lord Rossendale in the world who dignify their faults into virtues, and follow, "on principle," their own inclinations.

We cannot tell what Lilian would have been with a more yielding husband ; but we know that the moral pressure she was now under increased in her the very faults it was intended to crush. Her self-will grew the stronger for the opposition that called it into daily exercise. Her love of pleasure became a restless craving in the absence of its object—her temper grew stormy in resistance to the moroseness of his. Her indolent habits strengthened as he urged her to exertion ; never, in any of his commands, giving her a motive beyond obedience to himself and to a grim phantom which he called Duty, but which, indeed, bore no resemblance to that stern, but lovely daughter of Love and Wisdom, who marks for us our daily tasks.

On the last day of June, they returned to Norneley. They were to be followed in about a month by Mrs. Clinton and Alice, whom they left at The Hazels, entertaining a chosen circle of Mrs. Clinton's friends. She and her daughter were to make a short tour of visits, greatly to Lilian's envy, before proceeding to Norneley. Mrs. Clinton looked forward with

much pleasure to the August shooting-party, for, thought she, “there’s no society so pleasant as a country house when it is well-filled, and Henry won’t be cross while the shooting is going on ; besides, nothing can be better for Alice than such a party as that. There are such opportunities in country-houses. She will forget that unfortunate affair, then, I am sure.”

Mrs. Clinton knew as little of Alice’s heart as she did of the events then impending.

CHAPTER IX.

The stars a liquid softness had,
As alone their holiness forbade
Their falling with the dew.

* * * * *

They shine on every lovely place,
They shine upon the corpse's face
As it were fair beside.

MRS. BROWNING.

SUMMER in the woodlands ! what rapture these words convey to the mind of the poet, the dreamer, or the little child, their kindred spirit. I cannot write them without a vision of their beauty arising to shut from my sight this December landscape. I hear the soft rustle of the foliage, and the hum, and twitter, and buz

of life, above, below, around. I see the wild rose and the blossoming bramble wreathing beauty around rugged trees, as bright-haired infants play round the knees of their hoary grandsires, and I breathe the warm, rich incense which earth offers to her lord, the sun—the scent of countless flowers, of dewy earth, of unfolding leaves—all these thoughts, or rather sensations, spring into my mind at the idea of those words—summer in the woodlands !

In the shadow of the broad oaks of Norneley, Lilian walked with Wilfred. It was noon, and not a breath of wind was stirring among the highest trees, though in the upper air, masses of cloud were slowly drifting across the firmament, obscuring the sun at intervals. The air was hot and stifling, but the woods were cooler than the hillside, and Lilian was glad that her short walk home led through the thickest of the forest. She had been with Wilfred to an old woman's cottage in the wood: a visit in which she participated at Wilfred's earnest request, for he longed to awaken in her an interest for her own poor, and thought such a feeling could not fail to arise in her mind if she

would once become acquainted with some of them.

“Are you in a great hurry, as usual,” she said to Wilfred, stooping as she spoke, to gather a few wild hyacinths, the last of the season, that had clustered upon the shady side of a fallen tree.

“Not if you want me,” he replied, “I have no engagement at the moment.”

“Then let us sit down for a few minutes, it is so hot,” Lilian said.

She threw herself down upon a bank of moss, at the foot of a silver birch; throwing aside her broad straw hat, she rested her head against the tree, and lay there, her soft eyes raised to Wilfred’s face, herself the fairest thing in all that wilderness of beauty. A patch of sunshine rested on the turf at her feet; a web of tangled sunbeams, gleaming through fern leaves, glancing brightly from the prostrate ivy foliage, and resting with loving light on the trifoliate leaves of the wood-sorrel, and on its purple-stained blossoms, purer for the hue upon their whiteness.

“Sit down,” said Lilian, casting, with a glance,

the spell of her conquering beauty upon Wilfred's spirit. Like a dart it struck him, and the blow was felt, though it recoiled harmless from the panoply of heaven, which he never laid aside. For a moment his spirit trembled, as the firmest pine-tree will thrill to its roots when struck by a sudden blast; but instantly the shock was over, and the eyes he had just averted turned once more to Lilian. Now, as she lay before him, he thought of her, not as the woman he had loved so wildly once, but as the fair child who had gladdened the first summers of his life with her joyous beauty, and with a quiet heart he sat down beside her.

She did not speak for a few moments, but lay restlessly pulling to pieces the thin blades of grass that grew among the moss.

“Wilfred,” she said, at last, “do you know that I would gladly change places with that old woman we have just left.”

“She is very happy,” he replied, “she is on the brink of a blessed eternity, and there is nothing to darken or distress her last days on earth. But she has had her trials, her

struggles, her bitter sufferings, Lilian, in bygone days, and at threescore and ten, she has a foretaste of the rest into which she is to enter. Do not envy her, for she has had more sorrow than you will ever experience, I trust, Lilian."

"And she is the better for her sorrows, you would say."

"We are to be made perfect by suffering," he replied.

"Well," said Lilian, with a sorrowful smile, "I am not half as good now, as I was when I was more happy. I am getting more wicked every day."

"Do not say that; it is too solemn a self-accusation to be lightly made. It is a fearful thing to be consciously retrograding, but worse still to do so without knowing it. What we know we can amend."

"Everything is against me," she answered. "Oh, Wilfred, you must let me tell you all. I have no other friend, no one to advise me, no one to lighten my trouble with a word of sympathy. Wilfred, it is as much your duty to help me with your counsel, as to help the poor.

Do you think that old woman needed you as I do this moment? Remember that you are my pastor as well as theirs; and my friend and kinsman, my brother in the dear old days that I regret so much. Let me tell you all my difficulties."

Her tears fell fast upon the flowers on her knees; one hand was on Wilfred's shoulder, the other convulsively plucking up the grass and moss.

"Lilian," he said, "as your pastor I will listen to you, and counsel you as best I can. As your friend and kinsman, there is nothing lawful that I would not do to serve you. I am sure you know this. Tell me all your troubles, then, even those of your own making, Lilian."

"I am tired of life," she said, passionately, "tired, at least, of such a life as is now forced upon me. I am not accustomed to it, Wilfred. You know how it was with me in my own home; how kind my mother was; how many friends I had; how bright and full of pleasure was my life. Now all is dark and cold. I am forbidden everything, thwarted in everything,

ruled like a child. Duties are forced upon me, with nothing to make them bright; like Mariana in the 'Moated Grange' my life is weary, a little change, a little pleasure, is the desired thing that will not come; and oh, Wilfred, Henry is so unkind to me."

This was the complaint that Wilfred had hoped not to hear, that he had avoided hearing for so long; now it must be answered. It was as well, perhaps, that these bitter words were said at last.

"Not unkind, Lilian," replied Wilfred. "Will you hear me, Lilian, if I speak the open truth to you, as I would to one of the lowest of my parishioners?"

"I will hear anything from you."

"You have been spoilt," he said. "The world has been at your feet, you have had all its adulation, and none of its hard discipline. Since your birth, you have been loved, admired, flattered. You are loved still, and in a truer, though a sterner way. Providence has altered your circumstances. Those you are now placed in are favourable to the growth of many virtues,

do not give them evil plants to foster. Your present position is a safe and good one, temptations are withdrawn, blessings granted."

" Temptations ! my life is one temptation. I never found before that I had such a temper to contend with as is now daily called into action. Discontent was not in me until now ; indolence was never a sin of mine—but now—"

" Dear Lilian, circumstances cannot create faults ; all those you have named must have been in your nature long ago, though nothing happened to awake their manifestations. You can pull up the weeds the better for their appearance above ground."

" Then you think my position a happy one?"

" I think all positions may be happy ; but let us look yours in the face. You have begun the subject, and no false delicacy shall make me shrink from following it up. You have all worldly blessings that you can wish for. You have a distinct sphere of duty, and this, Lilian, is the first of blessings. Your way is plain before your face, your work ready to your

hand. You have a husband who loves you, I know—”

“ But in such a way ! never giving me what I wish for !”

“ Because he thinks, that by denying your wishes, he will turn them to better objects.”

“ No ! not always that reason, Wilfred. Because my wishes interfere with his, and he is selfish.”

Wilfred could not contradict her.

“ We must bear with each other’s faults,” he said, gently. “ You cannot live with any one without discovering many imperfections in your companion. But in this case, what is your own duty ?”

“ To obey, of course,” said Lilian, bitterly, “ and I do it ; the other two items of my vow are not so easy.”

“ They will become so ; but these are not all. There is an obedience which is not obedience. You bend to your husband’s will because his is the strongest, and conquers yours, which yet lives in internal rebellion. Obey your husband, Lilian, if not from love to him, at least from

love to God, a higher and a purer motive ; the lesser love will follow."

" And if I obey Henry thus, will he make me happy ?"

" God makes happy all those who serve Him, Lilian : but happiness must never be our aim. Let me set your course of action plainly before you as I see it. Try, Lilian, to trace God's work in all things, His service in all duties, His presence in all temptations, His love in all blessings. See in your husband the man He has given to be your life's companion—in a peculiar sense, the neighbour whom you are to love as yourself. Look tenderly on his faults, and be ever to him an influence on the side of right ; struggle with your own the more, that you may be to him a ministering spirit ; try to see and imitate his virtues, and perform every duty in the spirit of love ; admit no motives but the highest, and all will be well with you, Lilian.

" I will try," she murmured. " Pray for me, Wilfred, that I may succeed."

“I will,” he said ; “and your own prayers—
they will not fail.”

“I have been very selfish myself,” Lilian said, “and I have contended too much with Henry. I rouse opposition in him just as much as he does in me. I trust I shall not fall back into these ways, and perhaps, after all, we shall be very happy.”

At that moment the patch of sunshine disappeared from the turf at her feet, the lovely, quivering shadow of the fern-leaf vanished from the surface of the fallen tree, the ivy ceased to sparkle, the living light fled from the translucent sorrel-leaves, and the surface of the moss-bank, lately all stars and points of light, became of one sober, even green. A darkness as of twilight fell upon the forest, and the pines responded with a low, soft wail to a passing stroke of wind.

Lilian started up.

“What a melancholy sound !” she said, “and how dark it has grown ! Oh, Wilfred, it is an omen ! Just as I talked of happiness, the sky and the earth grew dark around me.”

“To show you,” said Wilfred, “that happiness does not consist of sunshine; to show you that clouds must come, and that you are not to droop beneath them. Look at the sorrel-blossoms—their delicate petals are still open, and now that the sunbeams are gone, they star the ground with tender light. Everything is growing and blossoming still.”

“I receive the lesson,” said Lilian, rising, as a few large drops of rain fell plashing among the ivy-leaves. “I must go home; there will be a shower, I think.”

“A wet afternoon, I fear,” said Wilfred. “Clouds have been gathering all the morning;” but he was mistaken; a half-gleam of sun broke into the gloom, momently brightening, till the wood grew dazzling with shining leaves and sparkling drops.

“No, it is all over now,” Lilian said, “and all is bright again. Here is the path to the rectory. Good-bye, Wilfred; I mean to be quite happy the next time I see you.”

With a few earnest words and a whispered blessing, he left her. She walked slowly home,

pondering over his counsels, resolving to follow them, seeking, for the first time, faults in herself and virtues in her husband, determining, that from that day a change should manifest itself in her life.

And it was so ; but not as Lilian dreamed.

Lord Rossendale was impatiently awaiting her. He had brought some papers for her to copy, and was annoyed at finding she had gone out, particularly as it was not her habit to do so in the morning, and he had reckoned upon her assistance. He had a head-ache, too, caused by the close and electric atmosphere, and his humour was more than usually morose.

“Lilian, I have been waiting for you very long. You know I often want you at this time of day. It is most inconvenient to me to lose my time waiting for you. I want copies of these papers before post-hour.”

“I am very sorry, Henry,” Lilian replied, with unwonted meekness. “I will copy them now. Don’t be angry with me.”

“But why couldn’t you have told me at breakfast-time that you would be out all

day? And where in the world have you been?"

"To see old Betsy, with Wilfred?"

"All this time walking to old Betsy's cottage and back?"

"It was so hot," Lilian answered.

"And I don't approve of your making Lynne as idle as yourself. He has plenty to do, and you are always trying to wile him from his duties to walk or ride with you."

Lilian's good resolves were fast failing her. It was hard to bear all this just then.

"Wilfred is never idle. You are very unjust. If you come between me and Wilfred, you will be doing more harm than you know of."

There was a threatening tone in her voice, which her husband could not brook in his present irritable mood.

"More harm than I know of! Have you put yourself under Lynne's spiritual direction, and is he your confessor? Lilian, I will not have priestly interference in this house, whether Protestant or Catholic."

"Oh, Henry!" cried Lilian, her colour rising

indignantly, “ how can you say such things of Wilfred ! It would be well for you and me, and for every one, if we were under his direction ; and if you knew how he takes your part—”

These were fatal words.

“ He takes my part, you say. Then it is very plain to me that you gave him cause to do so. Now I am aware of the nature of the conversation that kept you lingering in the wood, and neglecting your duties. You have installed Mr. Lynne as peace-maker between us. You have been confessing *my* faults to him, I conclude.”

Lilian trembled with fear and anger. An angry and terrified woman ! there is nothing fiercer in creation. Passion overcame her, and all Wilfred’s words, all her own good desires and earnest resolutions were flung to the winds.

“ I will tell you all,” she said, or rather muttered between her tightly-closed teeth. “ Your tyranny has been slowly breaking my heart, your selfishness has darkened my life. Everything that is bad within me is roused by

your stern treatment. Do you think I am to suffer always in silence? Wilfred was my dear brother always, and once he loved me as *you* could never dream of. I told him my sorrow—why should I not?—and he would have helped me, he would have cheered me on to bear my fate, he showed me gleams of hope, and, as I said before, he took your part, and might have won me back to you——”

“I do not need his kind offices. He had better abstain from this impertinence, and you from all future intercourse with him or any other meddling priest.”

Lilian was blinded with passion, or she would have seen that her husband’s anger was founded on false ideas, raised by her own hasty words; that a gently-spoken explanation from her might have made him revoke his unjust sentence, and perhaps see things as they really were, and value Wilfred the more for all he had said to Lilian; but, alas! both husband and wife were devoid of reason, governed only by the short, but raging madness of anger.

Lilian turned away—her fair features set

into an expression of utter ferocity, her colourless lips compressed, her eyes burning like bale-fires in her bloodless countenance—turned from her husband, and walked slowly from the room.

“Lilian!” he cried, but her retreating step was his only answer.

“She will come back,” thought he, and sat still, thinking—thinking of Lilian’s temper, of Wilfred’s “interference”—in short, of every one’s faults but his own—pitying himself, and blaming all who came in contact with him.

But Lilian did not return.

“It is as well,” he thought, “to let her have time to recover herself!” and, in pursuance of this thought, he rose and went out, followed, as usual, by his dog.

He walked rapidly on, regardless of the stifling heat, and as he walked, the storm subsided within him. The air, the turf, the fitful gleams of sunshine lighting all things into beauty around him, woke a better spirit in his breast. Nature can make her blessed influences

felt by all, though all will not acknowledge her power ; and as Lord Rossendale trod the furzy hill-side, new thoughts of himself and Lilian came thronging into his mind.

“ After all, I am too hard on her sometimes,” he said. “ I ought not to have abused Lynne as I did ; he never could mean any harm, but that sort of thing can’t be allowed to go on. She was ready to be good-natured, too, about copying my papers. I do think, this time, I did rather provoke her. It was a shame !—but this thundery weather always puts me out of temper—it’s my organization, I can’t possibly help it ! Perhaps she feels it, too. I won’t go home just yet. She gets over those things very quickly ; but the longer I leave her, the more completely she will have recovered herself. I will be very kind to her when we meet again.”

“ When we meet again !” Those words had a clear and certain meaning in his mind—he felt not their awful vagueness. We seldom do when we lightly talk of future meetings, never dreaming of the dark passage beyond which their scene may lie.

And all this time, where was Lilian ?

Her anger was too violent to last—it wore itself out in a few hurried turns up and down the hall. Lilian's elastic spirits could not long remain in their present state of collapse ; but they did not rise to their accustomed level, for there was a pang of remorse at her heart. The calmer she grew, the more deeply she regretted her wild words, her burst of passion. She longed for the power of recalling those dark moments, of retracting all she had said ; and then, with grievous self-reproach, she thought how recently she had determined on commencing a life of self-conquest, and how, with Wilfred's gentle counsels still sounding in her ears, she broke, in a moment, her compact to herself, her promises to him.

Why had she not obeyed him, and turned to One above for help ?

Subdued and sorrowful, she returned to seek her husband, and do what in her life she had never done—ask forgiveness of him. But he was not to be found. His hat was no longer on the table. He had gone out.

Lilian took up the French novel, but she

could not read it now. It was exchanged for another book, to which she gave but little attention, and thus the weary hours stole by. At last, finding that she could not occupy herself, tired with her walk and the past excitement, and oppressed with the heat of the day, she threw herself on the sofa, and lay there half-sleeping.

Suddenly she was aroused—by what, she could scarcely tell—but she felt half-conscious of a noise. Her dog had entered unperceived, and had coiled itself at her feet. It must have awoke her. How dark the room was!—surely the blinds were down. She rose and walked to the window, but started back, dazzled and bewildered at a flash of lurid brilliancy.

“Lightning!” she said aloud, and trembled—she knew not why, for she was no coward.

The thunder rolled out its long, deep cadence; and the dog, with a low whine, crept terrified to Lilian’s side.

“Poor Teagh,” she said, caressing the trembling animal, with a smile at its abject terror.

Another flash!—and instantaneously the roar of the heavens broke forth. The rain fell with a loud, fierce rattle, like the rush of an armed troop; flash after flash reddened the fearful gloom, louder and louder rose the roar above and the wild din below. Lilian's heart failed her. She was but a woman, and feared to watch the strife of the strong.

She was going to rise and ring the bell, but Teagh laid its fore paws in her lap, and, with a long, low whine, looked her in the face. The terror in the dumb creature's eyes chilled Lilian's soul with fear.

At that instant, her maid entered, looking pale and scared.

“I came to look for your ladyship. I feared your ladyship might be alarmed.”

“Stay here till the storm is over. Close the shutters, if you please.”

The maid obeyed; but now the lightning flared more fearfully still in the darkness, lighting up the room as with streaks of flame—streaming in between the shutters; and at every peal of the incessant thunder, the house seemed to tremble to its foundations.

“ His lordship,” said the maid, “ is under shelter, I hope. There was a flash! From lightning and tempest, good Lord deliver us !”

The thunder drowned Lilian’s faint “ Amen,” but this time it came two or three seconds after the flash.

“ The storm is moderating,” Lilian said. “ That peal was not quite so near.”

Five minutes more, and a faint flash, tardily followed by a low, distant roar, spoke that the passion of the elements was over.

Lilian desired her maid to open the shutters. The soft light of day streamed in, in a subdued sunshine, the blue sky gleamed between rifted clouds, and the trees, illumined with sunny raindrops, stood out brightly against the lurid rack.

“ Send John to the farm,” said Lilian, “ with Lord Rossendale’s waterproof coat. He is sure to be there.”

And she was again alone. Excitement had dissipated her gloom; besides, the dull heaviness of the overcharged atmosphere was now gone, and Lilian could occupy herself cheerfully while expecting the return of her hus-

band, for whom she was preparing a greeting unusually affectionate and submissive.

But he came not; and after a short hour (for indeed hours differ in their true length), the footman appeared, and told Lilian that "my lord was not at the farm—that he had been seen going up the hill—that it was believed he was going to 'the fox cover wood,' about a mile on the other side of it."

"That is not in the direction the storm came from," thought Lilian. "There could not have been much thunder there; but no doubt it rained, and he staid in the wood till it was over. He will not be back yet for an hour or so."

But the hour passed by, and another and another.

"He must have walked on to the town," thought Lilian. "He said this morning that he wanted a long walk. He has business there, I am sure. He will be very late."

She rang the bell.

"Send Lord Rossendale's horse across the hills to R——. He must have gone there, and is now walking back. Do not sound the gong

for dressing till he returns, and send the horse at once."

She was not alarmed, but restless and uneasy. Dinner-time had arrived, and there is always a lurking feeling akin to fear when the hour comes at which all members of the family assemble, if there is one absent unexpectedly.

The unseen sun set in the darkness of another thunder-shower, with fainter lightning and more distant peals; and when the clouds rolled away, the pale moon was peering hazily from the vaporous blue, and twilight was rapidly failing.

Again the maid entered.

"Will your ladyship dress? It is very late."

"I don't think Lord Rossendale's horse can have met him yet," said Lilian. "He must have been detained at R——. No, I will not dress."

"Will not your ladyship have candles brought up?"

"No," said Lilian, abruptly. She did not wish to feel how late it was. She would not make it evening by shutting out the visible darkness of the world without. She seated

herself at the window, to watch the drifting clouds, and see the stars come out one by one.

The night grew clearer as it deepened, for a light breeze had arisen, and cloud after cloud passed out of sight, swept beyond the far horizon. The moon shook off her veil, and looked brightly down upon the sleeping woods and restless river, upon the green hill-top, and the forest on its further side. It tinged with light the quivering tops of the pines, and gleamed in a silver shower from the waving birch. It sent a beam to find its way between the crowding boughs, and rest on—what?

The face of a corpse. Stretched upon the living turf, the living flowers around it, the living trees above, lay the cold clay that had been man. Less than the night moth hovering in the moonbeam, less than the strawberry blossom at his side, is the lifeless thing that was once the lord of that fair forest in which the bolts of Heaven sought him, extinguishing his life and sparing theirs.

He lay as one would lie who was struck into eternity by one fierce blow from the artillery of Heaven. His shoulders rested on the trunk of

a felled sapling, and his head hung back, the chin upraised, the hair falling straight to the turf below, save one singed and blackened lock, which did not reach it. His clenched hands lay upon the grass ; between the white fingers of one tender blades and little star-like flowers drank in the moonlight, but near the other was warmer life. There, in the lonely forest, as at many another death-bed, Love and Death were side by side.

A man might have looked with silent awe on the cold remains of his fellow-man, but he would have given tear after tear to the dumb anguish in that dog's face and form. She lay beside him, licking his cold hand, pausing at intervals to spring up with a cry of agony, and look wildly in his face, and then, with a low whine of despair set herself once more to her hopeless labour.

On such a sight the moon looked down for a few brief moments of that summer's night, and then took her cold radiance thence, leaving in darkness the folded flowers, the Immortal's forsaken tenement, and the mortal creature in its sorrowing love.

CHAPTER X.

Thus, my brother, grow and flourish,
Fearing none, and loving all :
For the true man needs no patron,
He shall climb, and never crawl :
Two things fashion their own channel,
The strong man and the waterfall.

CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY.

IT is once more winter at Norneley. It is Christmas-eve. Two women sit together beside the fire, in a spacious bed-room at the manor-house. Between them is an empty cradle, or rather bassinet, lined and hung with the richest lace, which one of the women is adjusting ; while the other, a fat, comely matron, sits looking down upon something in her lap, scarcely visible in the subdued candlelight.

“ It’s a sad and sorrowful Christmas, Mrs. Forrest,” she said, shaking her head as she glanced at her companion. “ There’ll be no merry-making at the birth of *this* Lord Rossendale, I think.”

“ Ah ! Mrs. Edwards,” replied Lady Rossendale’s maid, “ it’s no case for merriment ; though we may well be thankful that my lady’s life was spared, and her infant’s too. She will do well now, with your skill and God’s blessing, Mrs. Edwards—but the baby ?”

“ Ah, poor thing ! it has not twenty-four hours life before it, I’m afraid.” And the nurse uncovered its tiny face, the tiniest that in her long experience she had ever seen, and sighed as she replaced the covering. “ It wouldn’t weigh three pounds,” she said.

“ But it has lived through the day, nurse, and we thought it could not do that. Perhaps there is some hope.”

“ While there’s life there’s hope,” said Mrs. Edwards. “ Who could have thought it would have been born alive ? And it’s indeed a blessing above what we could have expected, Mrs.

Forrest, as you said, that her ladyship should have got over it as well as she did. We must be content with what's been granted, and not grumble if it pleases God to take this infant."

"The last Lord Rossendale!" said Mrs. Forrest. "Well, we thought the last was gone, six months ago. That was an awful time, Mrs. Edwards."

"My lady took on sadly, I was told."

"I thought she would have lost her senses, Mrs. Edwards. For days and days she would not speak, or eat, or lie down in bed. How she lived through it all is a miracle. Her mother and Miss Clinton came at once, but they only seemed to make her worse. Mr. Lynne was the first person she said a word to, and he has been with her continually since. He's a good, kind gentleman, Mrs. Edwards, and saved my lady's life, I do think, by getting her to speak of her trouble."

"He has a kind, good heart," said the nurse. "I saw it in the look he gave this poor baby just now, when he had baptized it. Was it he who broke the terrible news to her ladyship?"

“Yes, he was the first person who was told of it. The body of my lord was found by Ramsey and Wilson, on the night of the 2nd of July, and Ramsey went straight to the rectory, and told Mr. Lynne, and he broke it to my lady at once. It was a fearful task, and she was no more prepared for it than the child in your arms. She thought he had been asked to sleep at the town, to avoid the stormy ride home; and she was scarcely uneasy about him, poor thing!”

“The poor dear lady! What an awful shock!” said Mrs. Edwards, with tears in her eyes.

“And there was not a sign of injury on the body,” said Mrs. Forrest, “nothing but one singed lock of hair, a black mark on the back of the neck, and another on the left heel. The doctor, at the inquest, said that the lightning had gone down the spine.”

“A fearful death indeed. We should all be prepared, Mrs. Forrest; the like may come to us, some day.”

“God forbid,” the maid answered, with a

shudder ; it's a frightful way of being called to one's account. But, Mrs. Edwards, you'd have broke your heart to see the sorrow of one poor creature—a dumb animal too—his dog. Old Bess never left him from the time God struck him down till they laid him in his grave. They found her licking the dead hand, and she did not snarl or growl when they took him up, but looked in their faces, Mr. Wilson says, as if she hoped they could do for him what she had been trying so hard to do, and bring him back to life. No one had the heart to turn the poor thing that loved him back from following his funeral ; and when they took him down into the vault, she broke through the people, crept up to the coffin and died. There was not a dry eye among the thousands there, when they saw that.”

“ Poor creature ! I believe there are more faithful hearts among such as her, than among Christians. But here's the doctor.”

Doctor Browne had entered noiselessly.

“ How is it now, nurse ?” he said, lifting the infant off her lap.

“Alive, Sir, and no more.”

“It has the shadow of a chance,” he said, after examining the little creature. “With a good nurse, it may live.”

“And my lady, Sir?” said Mrs. Forrest, inquiringly.

“She is well, so far,” was the reply. “Keep her quiet, Mrs. Edwards. Don’t let her be excited about the child; and mind, she must not see it. She had better not attach herself to it as yet.”

“Of course, Sir,” replied Mrs. Edwards, who considered these directions as entirely superfluous, she having already decided on a discreet and prudent line of conduct respecting her patients. And now the colloquy between Mrs. Forrest and the monthly nurse was terminated by the latter returning to her post in Lady Rossendale’s room, first giving the baby to its own nurse, a countrywoman who had followed the doctor into the room. Mrs. Forrest went down to describe the heir for the tenth time, to the housekeeper and other anxious functionaries below stairs, who had

not yet been favoured with a sight of their little lord.

All this time Mrs. Clinton, Alice and Wilfred, were sitting together in the room which had been Lilian's boudoir, talking over the past event.

“If her poor baby lives,” said Mrs. Clinton, “she will quite recover her spirits, I am sure. When she is strong and well again, we must take her about, and cheer her up. This place is the very worst she can be in ; and if Mrs. Lester comes to her again, she will be as wretched as ever.”

“I think,” said Alice, “she had some little pleasure in Mrs. Lester's visit two months ago.”

“So much the worse ! When people are in that dreadful state of nervous depression, the companions they like are always the worst for them, because they encourage them in being unhappy, instead of rousing them.”

“But,” said Wilfred, “Lilian's trial was a real one—an overwhelming affliction : sympathy was what she needed most. I think Mrs. Lester's visit was really a benefit to her.”

"I am glad, however, that she is not here now," persisted Mrs. Clinton. "It might have been all very well just at first, but now she will want cheerful friends about her. Now that her child is born she will begin life afresh, the past will seem like a horrible dream, and must never again be mentioned."

"But the past is never obliterated," said Wilfred. "She cannot and ought not to forget."

"She never will," Alice observed, "but happiness will return, I trust."

"The melancholy way you two talk," said Mrs. Clinton, "is quite dreadful to hear. You can't possibly feel as I do for my poor dear child, and yet I don't talk about never forgetting, and 'trusting' that happiness will return; as if there was any doubt that it would! And, after all, Lilian's present position is not such a dreadful one. When I lost your poor father, Alice, I heard very little about sympathy —except, indeed, from you, Wilfred—and Lilian's trial is nothing compared to mine."

"There were most afflicting circumstances," said Wilfred, "about poor Rossendale's death."

Wilfred alone knew the whole horror of Lilian's affliction. She had told him all ; he knew that they had parted in anger, unknowing that it was for ever ; but to no other being had Lilian alluded to this torturing circumstance.

"It was most shocking, certainly," said Mrs. Clinton, "but an easy death after all. And I don't want to say anything unkind of poor dear Henry, but after all, Lilian will be happier now, than she was with him. He was very hard upon her sometimes, and his temper was a little—just a little sullen occasionally ; his nature was the very reverse of hers, poor child ! I expect to see Lilian very happy some day, if her infant lives. I wonder how it is now ! I will go and see."

And the young grandmother rose and went to Lilian and her child.

"Mamma does not quite understand Lilian's distress," said Alice, "but I do think and hope that happiness is in store for her. Her mind will be steadied by all she has suffered, and her child will occupy her affections."

"You are sanguine about its life," said Wilfred. "I fear she will lose it."

"I can hardly think of that," said Alice, "I feel as if that puny little creature would be Lilian's good angel. It will not die, Wilfred; it will be to Lilian a living duty which she will love; a link with all goodness; an object for constant hope, and love, and prayer. It will live, I know."

"We cannot tell," he answered. "I trust it may. It will, if indeed its life would produce more real good than its death. We must not fix our hopes, Alice, on any one event or circumstance, but on the true and abstract good, which comes in many forms, in our losses as much as in our blessings."

"I know it does," Alice replied; "I have learnt this lesson thoroughly, I think; still, I have good hopes of the child."

Dr. Browne entered at this moment. He was staying in the house, and enjoying himself extremely, as doctors do when fairly installed in command of a patient. He was a kind-hearted man, very clever in his profession

but he was a man of the people—one who, by his talents, had raised himself to his present class from that of an apothecary's boy—therefore he had not the courtly over-refinement of manner in which fashionable physicians delight. He was worshipped by the poor, and respected by the rich, although he occasionally bored the latter class by forcing on their attention the condition of the former, and talking strongly about sanitary reform, education, and other advantages for the million. He was often called chartist and democrat, yet he was but an honest, independent man, neither the minion of any petty aristocrat, nor the firebrand of discontent among a demoralised populace. He was an untitled nobleman: for his soul was upright and free.

But, alas ! he sometimes wore cotton gloves, and had been seen to eat cheese with a knife. So he was considered by ladies and gentlemen extremely vulgar. Alice did not think so, nor did Wilfred, his valued friend and companion at many a scene of death and suffering.

They pushed back their chairs from the fire

as he entered, and drew the great arm-chair from its corner for him.

“ Thank you, Sir ; thank you, Miss Alice,” he said, seating himself between them.

He would say “ Sir,” and he would say “ Miss Alice,” always, to Mrs. Clinton’s indignation.

“ Her ladyship is doing uncommonly well,” he continued, “ although her strength is low. The slightest exertion or excitement must be avoided. Your sister is a tender plant, Miss Alice.”

“ She is sadly changed,” Alice replied. “ She was once so strong !”

“ But always highly organised,” the doctor continued. “ Not a nature to bear shocks. Very different from the generality of my patients. It is a great blessing that the poor are made of harder stuff ; not hard enough, though, Heaven knows, for all they have to bear. But Lady Rossendale will do well, I have no doubt. It is a happiness I seldom enjoy, to attend a patient for whom I can order the necessary comforts, and who will, I know, have all she requires for her recovery.”

“ And her child ?” asked Alice.

“ It is very, very weak,” he replied ; “ but I have hopes of it. It has a good nurse, and that is everything. Perhaps our people will have a true, good friend in this Lord Rossendale, when the old doctor is in his grave, Mr. Lynne.”

“ I trust so,” said Wilfred. “ You and I must be the boy’s friends, I think. If he is much with us, he will soon know his tenants and labourers.”

“ Ah !” said Dr. Browne, shaking his grey head, “ that’s not what young lords are taught to know in these days. It would be considered as much as his life’s worth to let him go into the poisonous holes we visit.”

“ He must not do that,” said Wilfred ; “ but he will, I hope, be fully educated for his position —taught to know all, and do all, that can make him an efficient friend to those among whom he is placed, and who will be to a certain extent his dependants.”

“ Their friend here, their advocate in what is called ‘ another place,’ ” Alice observed.

“ Yes,” said Wilfred, “ he is born to a noble career, if life is granted him. God grant that he may read his destiny aright, and fulfil it—fulfil his duty to God, and his duty to his neighbour, which lies so clear before him.”

“ I shall watch his young life anxiously,” said the good doctor, “ while I am spared to do it. It will be a sore pang to me, if I see the child on whom so many fates depend growing up a fashionable fool, a cipher to the most important part of society. Better he should not survive this night, but perish in his innocence, before he has neglected a duty.”

As he spoke, Mrs. Clinton entered the room. “ That horrid doctor !” she thought to herself ; but she sat down beside him with an amiable smile.

“ Go up, Alice, my dear,” she said, “ and sit with Lilian, but only for ten minutes. She must be established for the night, and left quiet at the end of that time, Mrs. Edwards said.”

“ Miss Alice is an excellent nurse,” remarked the doctor as the door closed. “ She is very quiet and cheerful.”

“Very,” said Mrs. Clinton, who had no wish to converse with Dr. Browne. “What have you and Alice been talking about, Wilfred?”

“We have all three been building castles in the air,” he answered—“castles for the poor little infant to spend his life in—talking over his future.”

“His future! Why, Wilfred, are you going to be ambitious for your little cousin? What do you intend him to be?”

“A faithful dispenser of his gifts,” replied Wilfred; “an

“Active doer, noble liver,
Strong to struggle, sure to conquer!”

“A true Reformer,” added Dr. Browne.

Mrs. Clinton gave the last speaker a scornful glance.

“My grandson will not be a radical, I think,” she said. “He is not likely to prove an acquisition to the cause of democracy.”

“We are no democrats,” said Dr. Browne. “I don’t want to be governed by the people; but if by the cause of democracy, you mean

their cause, I trust he will, indeed, if his life be spared, prove an acquisition to it. We want more such noblemen as two or three whom I could name."

"Who lecture at mechanics' institutes, and circulate little books of their own, or write prefaces to other people's. They don't interest me. They all belong to the enemy, those kind of people. No, no! I like to see every class in its right place, properly separated. My grandson will be a Conservative, as were his ancestors. I trust by the time he grows up, we shall have a permanent government, and of the right sort; such as he can be a member of."

"My dear aunt," said Wilfred, "I don't like your party names. What is best for the nation will be gained, if each man is but true to what he thinks right and good. I hope the boy will be a conservative of all good rules and things, and a reformer of all abuses, as far as his powers go. Above all, I hope he will never be blinded by party feeling. I wish all those political class-names were abolished."

“I wish they were,” said Dr. Browne. “They frighten men from their principles, or bind them to those in which they have no faith. Let me see each public man true to his own self, and regardless of what others say.”

“I hate argument,” said Mrs. Clinton, “and I hate politics; but I have always heard from those who understood the subject that it is all nonsense to talk of independence, and keeping clear of party. It can’t be done; and if it could, nothing would ever be effected.”

“It can be done,” blurrily responded the doctor. “If men will be single-minded and straightforward, it will be done. And if everybody acts well and truly, good and true measures will be carried. That’s all we want.”

“He is insufferably rude,” thought Mrs. Clinton.

“Well,” she said, “I don’t want to get into a discussion. Oh! here’s Alice. Alice, my dear, you are come at the right moment to stop such a tiresome argument. Oh! don’t ask what it was about, or we shall have it all over again! How is Lilian?”

"She seems well, I think," replied Alice, who had just re-entered; "and the baby is asleep. I should like to know what this argument was about, but I must not ask."

"Politics," said Mrs. Clinton. "Now are you satisfied? A subject you don't care about, I know."

"I only care about its principles," said Alice; "but the science itself I confess to disliking, because I don't understand it, I suppose."

"Then we'll talk of something else, Miss Alice," interposed the doctor. "By the bye, can you tell me anything of that gentleman whose little girl I was attending last winter here? I have often thought of him since, and of the pretty child that survived my poor little patient. Where are they now?"

Perhaps Alice could have replied to this question without much apparent discomposure had she been alone with the inquirer, and felt that her secret was safe; but now her mother's eyes were on her, and she was conscious, too, of a glance from Wilfred. Their presence

destroyed her self-possession. She changed colour, moved uneasily, and would have made some indistinct reply, but Wilfred came to her assistance.

“He is in Ireland at his own home,” he said.

Alice knew that Wilfred and Desmond occasionally corresponded; but Wilfred never mentioned Desmond’s letters to her, nor did she ever now exchange a word with her cousin on the subject nearest to her heart. No wonder then that she listened eagerly, hoping the doctor would ask more, and that Wilfred would reply, but it was otherwise; for although Dr. Browne was not highly perceptive, he saw enough in Alice’s look and Wilfred’s manner to make him quit the subject. But Mrs. Clinton could not forgive him for having introduced it. She saw her daughter’s agitation, and it revealed to her how little Desmond was forgotten, and what deep emotion could be aroused by the mere mention of him. She thought Dr. Browne more odious than ever, after his unconscious stumble upon forbidden ground; and

she accordingly broke up the conversation, from which she could not exclude him, by ringing the bell for candles, and burying herself in a book when they arrived, with an ostentation of studiousness which plainly expressed her wish that her example should be followed. And that evening, there was no more conversation worthy of the name.

CHAPTER XI.

The least touch of their hand in the morning, I keep
day and night :
Their least step on the stair still throbs through me, if
ever so light :
Their least gift, which they left to my childhood, in long
ago years,
Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and gazed at through
tears.

MRS. BROWNING.

LILIAN's recovery was slow and tedious, and for many days the life of her infant hung upon a thread. Each following night was expected to be its last, by its anxious watchers ; but many days and nights rolled by, until at last the fluttering principle of existence in that tiny frame became confirmed, and it was pronounced

that, with God's blessing, the child would live. It might be shown to its mother now, the doctor said; and Alice took the child, and carried it to Lilian.

She is strangely changed since we saw her last. That countenance that had been all brightness, those radiant eyes, those locks of sunny gold; where is all the beauty that was once her proud possession? Not gone; but shaded, darkened, changed to another meaning.

Tears have taken the brightness from her eyes, the colour from her cheek; those fair features now speak of sorrow and pain to the beholder's eye, and suffering has set its mark on that once clear brow, where unwonted thought now sometimes manifests its presence. Yet still, at rare intervals, the sorrowful face lights up, and a look gleams forth, telling of the Lilian of brighter days. Such a subdued radiance now lighted her countenance as Alice placed in her arms her little son.

Long and earnestly she looked upon his sleeping face.

"How calm and comfortable he looks," she

said ; and then she thought of the restless temper and angry passions to which he was heir, and a dreadful fear came over her, a heavy sense of her incapacity to train a spirit such as his would be, a shuddering remembrance of past days of unhallowed strife with him who lived again in that her offspring ; and, her heart swelling with agony, she gave back the child to Alice, and burst into passionate tears.

“ I brought you hope and comfort, dear Lilian,” said her sister, “ be composed ; look, the baby is awake. Will you not take him ? ”

The gentle voice soothed her, and timidly she raised her head and looked into her child’s eyes, as if fearing to meet some bitter reproach in their glance. She dashed her tears aside and saw that in the clear blue eyes of her infant there was no resemblance to his father.

“ Is he like me ? ” she said, hurriedly, as if fearing the reply.

“ He is considered like our family,” Alice answered. “ I fancy a look of Wilfred ; but one can’t tell yet. Is he not pretty, Lilian ? ”

“ He *shall* be like Wilfred,” she said. “ Wil-

fred shall train him, Alice, and you will help.” And Lilian’s countenance brightened; Alice had indeed brought her hope and comfort. From this day she revived. With her child’s strengthening life her own grew brighter, a new morning had dawned upon her, the spring-time had returned. Forgiveness seemed to shine upon her from the infant features of her son. He seemed to reconcile her, as it were, to the dead; and she treasured him as a token of peace from the husband, who in the midst of strife had been snatched from her side.

It was on Easter Sunday that the infant, who, as we said before, had been baptized the day of his birth, was publicly “received into the Church” and named after his two grandfathers, “Canice Henry.” Lilian was anxious to mark the occasion by more than the usual Easter-gifts to the poor, all festive demonstrations being entirely out of the question. Therefore, at Wilfred’s suggestion ample presents of clothes and food were distributed on Easter Monday to the poorest of the tenantry, and to all were given books, and large outline prints,

framed and glazed, representing scriptural and historical subjects ; gifts highly valued by the recipients, and honourably placed on the most conspicuous part of the wall of many a homely kitchen, whence they spoke their simple lessons to the eyes of old and young. To every child born in the parish since the birth of its present lord, was given a Bible and Prayer-book ; and on the day following, as well as on that of the distribution of these gifts, the entire grounds and woods of Norneley were thrown open without restriction to the public, and it may be mentioned that the privilege was not abused. Among the multitudes there, there was not one who, in his merriment forgot that the general joy was not unclouded, or indulged in noisy mirth. Not a flower was injured, not a spot defaced, although for two days the walks and gardens swarmed with poor visitors, and crowds of children pursued their sports in every portion of the grounds.

Mrs. Clinton shut herself up with her eldest daughter during what she termed “ this invasion of the Goths ;” but Alice and Wilfred mixed

freely with the people, deriving real pleasure from their evident enjoyment. Lilian looked at them out of the window once or twice, and languidly remarked to her mother that they were wonderfully well-behaved, and that even the boys were remarkably quiet near the house.

Mrs. Clinton was ready to reply that their presence was an intolerable bore; but strange to say, she was checked by a feeling of respect to Wilfred, or perhaps to Lilian's regard for him, and she could not abuse any measure of his, certainly not in Lilian's presence.

Not long after the festival just described, Dr. Browne pronounced, in the oracular manner peculiar to his class, that Lady Rossendale and her infant required change of air, that nothing would so surely conduce to the strength of both, and that it was highly desirable that they should quit Norneley some time before the summer season, which they ought to spend at the sea-side. Lilian promised a willing obedience to his commands; her old love of change had not left her, and she felt the strong necessity of leaving no means untried that could possibly contribute to the health of her weakly child.

Mrs. Lynne wrote a long letter to her niece, in which she enlarged on the marvellous efficacy of sea-air, and described the beneficial effects it had produced five-and-twenty years ago on the constitution of dear Fred, concluding with a hope that in process of time the sweet little Canice might grow up "just such another" as the aforesaid idol. Mrs. Clinton recalled the delight of a tour she had once made in the Isle of Wight, and Dr. Browne approving of that locality, it was fixed upon for Lilian's summer residence. A house was taken on the south side of the island, surrounded with pretty grounds, and possessing a pleasant garden and easy access to the strand ; and the departure of the whole party was fixed for the second week in May.

On the eve of their departure, just as Alice was going to bed, Mrs. Clinton entered her room, attired in a dressing-gown of rose coloured cashmere, and evidently full of ideas and conversation, by no means inclined to deposit on a pillow the head whose interior was so active, and whose exterior was so becomingly adorned with what I could scarcely call a night-

cap, for it was more suggestive of Aurora than of Erebus ; but not to be too prolix, I will only say that Mrs. Clinton came into Alice's room, in her dressing-gown and night-cap, to have a good talk. This was a painful habit of Mrs. Clinton's, and cost her friends many a sleepy morning and subsequent headache ; if she had anything to talk over, she invariably reserved it for the midnight hour, and then, full of accumulated words, she would enter the chamber of some unhappy friend, and talk till sleep or morning came to make a third at the discourse.

“ Alice,” said Mrs. Clinton seating herself beside her daughter, “ don't you think Lilian really requires this change very much ? And you too, my dear, will be the better for it. It is an excellent move.”

“ I think it is, mamma,” said Alice. “ We shall all enjoy it. It is so much pleasanter than going to London.”

“ What an extraordinary idea ! I can't understand your making the comparison. Of course, for poor Lilian, London is out of the question, and I am quite ready to make any sacrifice

in order to be with her and her child, just now ; but I am surprised at you, Alice, saying that it will be pleasanter than London. I assure you, my dear, you will find it exceedingly dull : the Isle of Wight does not get pleasant until August ; but I think you require rest and change too this year, so I do not so much regret your losing one season.”

“ And I am perfectly satisfied, mamma : therefore we are all agreed. Wilfred will miss us sadly, I think, and Dr. Browne too.”

“ Dr. Browne ! what does it signify about him ? How Lilian can bear that insufferable creature, I can’t think ; he’s very clever, there can be no doubt of that ; but such a bear, and so dreadfully radical ! yet Wilfred likes him. What a contrast they are ! Poor Wilfred ! his life is a very solitary one. I wonder how he can bear it.”

“ He is the happiest person I know,” said Alice. “ His life is all peace and joy, and he wishes for nothing that he does not possess. I don’t think he ever feels solitary, he is so much among the poor.”

“ It really surprises me, Alice, to see your

want of perception. You think Wilfred wishes for nothing ? Now just open your eyes, and look at the state of the case.”

“ Well, mamma ?” said Alice, inquiringly.

“ Well, my dear, are you quite blind ? Just compare the past and present of Wilfred’s life ; he *once* had a wish, you know, and I am sure he has it still.”

“ You mean about Lilian, mamma ? Oh, that is quite, quite over ; I am convinced he never dreams of renewing *that* part of his past.”

“ I am very glad to hear, Alice, that *you* think such feelings are so easily conquered, or so naturally perishable, perhaps ; but I know Wilfred. He is not changeable in any way. Depend upon it, Alice, in two years she will be his wife.”

Alice started ; it did indeed surprise her to hear her mother so calmly prophecying a marriage of which she was sure to disapprove. Mrs. Clinton smiled at Alice’s evident surprise, and proceeded to explain herself.

“ It is quite another thing, her marrying him now, from what it would have been two

years ago. I would never, never have consented to it then. Now, of course, Lilian is entirely her own mistress; but when she consults me, I shall give her my fullest approval. It would be a most excellent thing, Alice. It's a pity they are cousins, I confess; but in everything else it would be suitable."

"I should be quite delighted at it," said Alice; "nothing would please me more. Lilian would lead a happy and a useful life at home. Wilfred would not be taken from his duties, and Lilian's fireside would be no longer desolate; her boy would have a kind and loving father, who would train him for his position."

Mrs. Clinton laughed.

"Stop there, Alice!" she cried. "You are adding romantic visions to my sober prophecy. As for Wilfred's capacity for training little Rossendale for his position, I am afraid in this matter he will fall short; but Eton and Oxford will do that, I hope. Wilfred will only make a model landlord of him—a superior clodhopper."

“ Well, mamma, that is his position ; he is to be a landlord, and he ought to know a good deal about agriculture, to set an example to his tenant-farmers ; and if he is ‘ superior’ besides, what more would we have ?”

“ ‘ Superior’ means having a taste for the arts, does it not, Alice ? talking about ‘ the true and the beautiful,’ and giving Raphael’s cartoons to beggars.”

It was Alice’s turn to laugh.

“ I hope, mamma,” she said, “ that Canice will do more than that when he grows up. I am sure Wilfred would never wish to give him a limited or one-sided education, and I have no doubt he will be sent to Eton all in good time. But your delightful prophecy is, I fear, too good to be accomplished.”

“ Now tell me what earthly impediment to its fulfilment you can discover ?”

“ None, except that the idea has not occurred to either of the parties.”

“ My dear Alice, how can you tell ! I can see plainly that the very contrary is the case ; and were it otherwise, I should know as well as

possible, judging from the past, and from the present position of Lilian and Wilfred, that their marriage is an inevitable certainty.”

“ I wish I could think so too, mamma. Time will show ; and meanwhile, I will hope for it.”

“ You may very safely do so, my dear. As for me, I have no doubt they are already attached to each other.”

“ But not in that sort of way, mamma !”

“ Nonsense, Alice ! In what sort of way do you think a young man, who is not her brother, can attach himself to a beautiful and fascinating woman, in whose society he lives, and who consults him in all things with that sort of affectionate deference which no man’s heart could resist—a woman whom he once loved devotedly, and not very long ago either, and whose very changes and sufferings since that day are all calculated to make her dearer to him and suit her character to his ? Alice, you don’t know human nature as I do, and it would be contrary to all the laws of human nature, that Wilfred’s attachment to Lilian should not now revive with double force.”

“ If she marries him, I have no doubt of the happiness that will result to herself and her child. I trust it may come to pass.”

“ Yes, she would be happy, for I can see that she is even now insensibly becoming attached to him ; but the real gainer would be Wilfred. It would be a splendid marriage for him ; he will be the envy of half London. I hope he will appreciate his good fortune.”

“ Not that part of it, I think,” said Alice. The good fortune was all Lilian’s, she thought. “ You have given me a pleasant subject for my dreams, mamma,” she added.

“ I wonder your dreams never took that direction before,” said Mrs. Clinton ; “ but I suppose they would never turn to anything so commonplace and probable as the marriage of Lilian and Wilfred.”

Here a clock in the passage came to Alice’s rescue by kindly striking one.

“ Dear me, how late it is !” said Mrs. Clinton, “ and Doctor Browne said you were never to sit up late, though I do believe he is an old fool in some things. Couldn’t you have re-

minded me of the time, Alice ! Good-night, my dear. Now I hope you will be discreet. The least hint to Lilian or Wilfred would spoil all. Good-night ! ”

And Mrs. Clinton glided from the room, leaving Alice to her slumbers.

Mrs. Clinton’s knowledge of human nature was not entirely at fault. Lilian’s old affection for her cousin had gained warmth and strength of late. It had grown during her sorrow into such a love as scarcely belongs to any relation of life. She venerated as a father the young man whose age hardly exceeded her own by four years ; yet between them the tender familiarity existed, which distinguishes the fraternal tie, and in all things, in every taste and feeling, her will and fancy subjected themselves to him. His influence with her was unbounded ; in the time of discontent and rebellion that had preceded her widowhood she had turned to him as her only friend and guide, and when the blow had fallen which desolated her home, leaving her with shattered nerves and health to bear that bitterest sorrow, the regret which is

poisoned with remorse, she threw herself on him alone, refusing comfort from all but him, and hanging on his words as if for her there was no other solace.

And when her child was born, in the long languid hours that succeeded, Wilfred's society alone could cheer her, only at his approach the smile flitted across her features, and the colour returned for the instant to her faded cheek. She would now listen to him for hours as he talked to her on high and serious subjects, or told her the simple history of many an obscure fellow-creature, such as in past days would not have won from her a thought; she would yield to his slightest wish, assist in the furtherance of any plan of his, and even for his sake tolerate and obey Doctor Browne, who, but for him, would have been odious to her, for she was fastidious as ever, the nature of her sufferings not having been such as to blunt her keen but false refinement of taste.

And now, even her love of change was overcome by her regret at leaving Wilfred. He had become so necessary to her during the last

long, melancholy year, that she knew not how to do without him ; and on the morning of their departure, she said so to her mother, half jestingly, half in most tearful earnest.

“ He will come and see us,” Mrs. Clinton replied, knowing well that he could not leave his parish for such a journey. “ At all events, you will not be very long away, I suppose ? You will return for the winter ?”

“ Unless Doctor Browne sends you and the baby abroad,” interposed Alice.

“ Doctor Browne will do no such thing,” said Lilian, with all her old animation of manner. “ There are limits to my obedience ; besides, I am sure there was no necessity for this move. I am getting as strong as ever, and little Canice is thriving.”

“ Oh ! but he is very small, you know, my dear Lilian,” said Mrs. Clinton. “ Nothing should be neglected that could by possibility strengthen him. Here’s the carriage, and here’s Wilfred come to see us off, and Doctor Browne, too.”

The last name was pronounced with an im-

patient shrug, that augured ill for the good doctor's reception ; but Alice's kindly smile was enough to neutralise a stronger acid than her mother's irritability could supply.

"A fine morning for your journey, Miss Alice," he said. "I came to take a last look at my patients. Oh, there you are, nurse!"

He took the infant in his arms.

"Nurse, you must bring him back twice as heavy as he is now, you know ! But you have brought him on well — wonderfully well," he added, restoring her charge to the gratified nurse.

And then he turned to Lilian ; but she was standing on the steps talking to Wilfred, and evidently seeing no one else.

Mrs. Clinton seized upon the baby, and ingeniously managed to seize upon the doctor too, by pointing out to him various imaginary peculiarities she had just discovered in her little grandson's hands.

For once in her life, Alice recalled her mother's attention to a common-place, but important fact.

"The train will have started, mamma," she said, "if we do not make haste."

An impatient cough from the postillion formed an effective corollary to Alice's proposition. Wilfred was already assisting Lilian into the carriage. The baby was instantly restored to nurse, a hasty good-bye bestowed on the doctor and Wilfred, and they drove off.

Lilian had no idea of self-control, and when excited, she cared little for the presence of any one. As the carriage entered the avenue of limes, she threw herself back into a corner and burst into a torrent of tears.

Alice was terrified. Nurse stared in consternation. Mrs. Clinton took out a bottle of salts, and looked meaningfully at Alice while she applied the remedy.

"She's nervous and excited," said the diplomatic lady, for nurse's edification. "Her nerves are very much shaken, you know, that's all!" But she meant Alice to understand another story—the true one, too.

"Now, Lilian, my dear," continued Mrs. Clinton, "don't be so foolish, my darling.

There's a woman making you a curtsey—here's another! Sit up, my dear, and look about. You will be much stronger, I hope, when we come back!"

With such small talk Mrs. Clinton soothed her daughter, whose emotion soon exhausted itself; but all the diplomacy was of no avail, for nurse was quite as intelligent as other people, and saw plainly enough that "nerves" had little to do with the cause of Lilian's grief. The scene was afterwards comfortably described to Mrs. Forrest in the railway-carriage; and that excellent person, who adored Mr. Lynne, quite understood her mistress's sorrow, and silently hoped that "it would come to something one of these days."

In the afternoon they arrived at Mrs. Clinton's house in London, where they were to remain two or three days before proceeding to the Isle of Wight. Lilian's hitherto deep mourning was to be very considerably modified, and Mrs. Clinton had determined that Alice and herself should reappear in colours, now that spring was coming on; consequently, there were what ladies call "a few things to be got."

Mrs. Lynne rushed to her sister's house the moment her husband gave her leave, accompanied by Barbara, who, deeming the occasion a grave and sorrowful one, wore her most rigid mien and bearing, while Mrs. Lynne's kindly face expressed nothing but cordial, anxious sympathy.

“ My darling Lilian !” she cried, embracing her niece, and beginning to cry ; then suddenly bethinking herself of Lilian's nerves, and the duty of endeavouring to cheer her up, and maintaining her own composure, she swallowed her tears and asked for the baby ; then kissed her sister and Alice a great many times, and at last sat down gasping, but calm.

The baby was brought in, to be nearly devoured by its great aunt ; after which process Barbara possessed herself of her little cousin, and moving it slightly up and down, with a scientific expression of countenance, very different from the usual one on such occasions, remarked : “ It is very small, and very light !” Then restoring it to its irate nurse, she seated herself, unconscious of Mrs. Clinton's frown, and the angry flash of Lilian's eyes.

“ Oh, Barbara !” remonstrated her mother, “ indeed it’s a very nice little thing ! Come here, Alice ! I declare it has just Alice’s eyes, and her poor dear father’s mouth. It is quite a Clinton, Florence ! And look at its hands ! just its mother’s fingers !”

“ How did you leave Wilfred ?” Barbara asked Alice.

Mrs. Clinton marked Lilian’s conscious look at the mention of his name, and saw how unwillingly and absently she talked to her aunt while Barbara and Alice continued speaking of Wilfred.

His name had become a spell to her, not as hers had once been to him, for very different were their natures—different as the fathomless mountain lake and the rapid, shallow stream. But she had learnt in her sorrow to love the deep-souled, earnest-hearted being, whom in her prosperity she had slighted. She loved him, but as yet her new-born love was but a fluttering disturbance at her heart, although it was combined with that dependant, trusting friendship, and reverent admiration, which conscious weakness gives to strength and goodness.

For Lilian had learnt that she was weak—that in time of trial she had no support, no courage, no power to endure and hope ; and something like worship arose in her heart towards him whose human hand so lovingly upheld her, while it led her onwards to a stronger aid.

Even now that Lilian's health and spirits were fast returning, and her desolated mind again lending itself to its former tastes—and, alas ! I must say with much of its former frivolity—still the waters of affliction that had come with such torrent force upon her had here and there swept off the flowery surface-soil, and laid bare a deeper and more fertile stratum. Her reverence for Wilfred, her love for her child, were fair valleys in her soul that might yet “stand thick with corn ;” and in the clouded, misty, chastened light, plants might spring up that would not bear the unbroken sunshine with its withering brightness. It is on the darkest cloud, and while the rain still falls, that the emblem of hope shines forth with its most radiant hues of light.

CHAPTER XII.

Thou comest ! all is said without a word.
I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
In the noon sun, with souls that tremble through
Their happy eyelids from an unaverr'd
Yet prodigal inward joy.

MRS. BROWNING.

THE next day, according to Mrs. Clinton's resolution, was to be devoted to making various purchases. As shops were paradises in the eyes of Mrs. Lynne, it was arranged that this good lady should call for Mrs. Clinton in her brougham, and that they should go together ; while Lilian and Alice refreshed themselves with a drive in the country in Mrs. Clinton's open carriage. Barbara being, by tacit consent, excluded from both the excursions, neither of which she had any wish to join.

Lilian talked to her sister about little Canice, about her own future plans, and her intention of living principally at Norneley, occasionally visiting the sea-side for the benefit of her child's health; about Wilfred too, and the advantage and pleasure she and her son would derive from the proximity of his home to theirs.

Alice, rejoiced at her cheerfulness, entered fully into all her thoughts and feelings; and the sisters conversed very happily, till just as they were traversing the park on their return, Alice suddenly stopped short in the midst of a remark, sprang forward from her reclining position, and looked eagerly out at some distant object on the road, colouring violently as she gazed.

Lilian was quite startled.

“What’s the matter, Alice?” she cried. “What is happening out there? What are you looking at? Let me see.”

And Lilian looked, but saw nothing, while the carriage turning into Wilton Place, took them away from the mysterious spectacle.

“What was it, Alice?” said Lilian, fixing

her eyes on her sister's countenance, where a thousand feelings seemed to be contending for expression.

“Nothing—only I saw—”

“Mr. Desmond!” said Lilian, guessing the whole at once, and requiring no reply. She took her sister by the hand, and after giving her a few moments to recover her lost composure she said, kindly: “Now, Alice, you must tell me all about it. You have not forgotten him then?”

“I could not forget him, Lilian, you know. There was a very strong tie between us. We were friends—almost such friends as you and Wilfred are—before we became more to each other.”

This was unconsciously a very strong appeal to Lilian's sympathies.

“Mamma was rather hard upon you, I think, in breaking it off so determinately. I should have thought so at the time, but I could not believe you were both so very much in earnest. I made sure you would get over it, and, as mamma said, do better.”

“I could not do better than to do what

would make me and him happy. But I am sure mamma thought I should be miserable in Ireland, and she never appreciated him, and could not believe that I really cared—that I wished it myself, in fact."

" You were too obedient, Alice. You should not have given him up so easily."

" Not easily!" said Alice, the mere recollection of what she had suffered calling up an expression of anguish to her countenance which touched Lilian to the heart; " not easily. I said all I could; and then, when mamma was determined, what could I do? It was my duty to submit. Even Maurice acknowledged it after a time, and did not make it harder to me, for which I shall always thank him. And when I found there was no hope, what was left to me, except, indeed, to try and bear it well, and live to some good purpose, though not the life that I had dreamed of?"

" But you did not resist—you made no struggle, Alice."

" I resisted *myself*," she replied, contending with her tears. " I struggled against my own

sufferings, and the temptations they caused me—not half enough, I know—but still I struggled, Lilian !”

“ Dear Alice, you have had your share of suffering, I do believe, and all alone, too ; but what were your temptations ? To resist mamma’s determination ? I would have yielded to that had I been you.”

“ No, I am thankful to say I never doubted the clear duty of obedience ; but I was sorely tempted to despair, to repine at my fate, and grow inactive and useless, thinking that my proper sphere had been denied me, and that I could do nothing elsewhere. But these thoughts left me at last, and I recognised that my right position must be the one I was placed in, and that its duties were to be my sole comfort. It was very hard though !”

Lilian looked wonderingly at her sister. The carriage now stopped ; and as they entered the house, she said :

“ You must begin to hope again, Alice.”

But Alice shook her head sadly, and went to her own room, where she could not help

thinking over her glimpse of Maurice, and restlessly hoping, yet dreading, that she might see him once more before leaving London. He had not seen her—she was thankful for this, and yet how she would have treasured one glance from him! Why did he not look round? Still, if he had done so, he would perhaps now be suffering as she was. It was well he saw her not. Yet cruel that this one glimpse of him should come and raise such storms within her soul without affording the gleam of happiness which would have flashed across her spirit if their eyes had met!

“I must learn this bitter lesson over again,” thought Alice, with an unbreathed prayer for help. “I thought I had quite given him up, but this has come to show me that it is still to be done. God help me! I must not *think* now.”

And with the strongest effort of which her strengthened nature was capable, she took up a book, not as the French say, “*pour se distraire*,” but to afford herself the stern solace of labour. The book was Virgil. In her dread

of idleness—of dreaming-time—she had some time ago set herself to the study of Latin as an employment for spare moments ; and now, with her heart beating madly, and her head throbbing with excitement, she applied herself, lexicon in hand, to the passionless Georgics.

Meanwhile, Lilian was with her mother, who had also just returned from her drive in high good humour, having met a few friends in a shop, and heard a good deal of news.

“ Oh, Lilian !” she said, “ I have got such pretty things !—the nicest bonnet for Alice you ever saw. Your aunt enjoyed it all so much, poor creature ! and I have executed your commissions. Here are baby’s pelisse and hat, and his sashes, and— Oh, Lilian ! who do you you think I saw riding in the Park ? Sir Aubrey Howard ! So he has returned from his travels round the world ; and I met Major Burton as I was getting out at Harding’s. Did you see any one, Lilian ?”

“ That is what I want to talk to you about, mamma. We passed Mr. Desmond in the Park. I did not see him, but Alice did, and—”

Mrs. Clinton's countenance darkened.

"That Irishman again!" she said, impatiently. "I thought we had done with him! So I suppose Alice is up-stairs, tearing her hair?"

"Mamma, you must listen to me," said Lilian, in rather an indignant tone. "Alice is more submissive and resigned than any one else in the world would be, who felt as she did. She was, of course, overcome a little when she saw him so suddenly; but she is not tearing her hair. She can always command herself—always do everything and bear everything that she ought to do and bear; but her whole heart is given to Mr. Desmond: and, mamma, if you have any regard for her happiness, or for the remains of mine, you will give your consent to their marriage should he renew his proposals."

Mrs. Clinton was thoroughly confounded. That such a request should come from Lilian's lips!—from Lilian, to whom she could refuse nothing!—nothing, except *this*!

"My dear child," she said, "I would give anything this had not happened! And I wish

you had not taken Alice's part in this matter, for I can't bear opposing you, my child. Alice has been asking you to do this, I suppose?"

"How can you think so, mamma! Do you not know Alice better than that? No: she never dreamt of saying, or asking me to say, another word to you about it. But I cannot see my sister's happiness quite destroyed without doing my best to persuade you to alter your determination."

"But really, Lilian, I can't believe she can be so devoted to that uninteresting creature. It's impossible, you know. There is nothing in him to fascinate a young girl, I am sure. I only considered her happiness in what I did."

"Yes, but you know, mamma, Alice is not like other girls. All her tastes are peculiar. I am perfectly convinced that she can never be happy with any one but Mr. Desmond."

"She thinks not, perhaps."

"I think not, too, mamma," said Lilian, in her most positive tone. "And with him she

will be happy. He suits her in many ways. She has no ambition, and likes a country life, and such occupations as his home and position would give her."

"But *such* a country!" remonstrated Mrs. Clinton. "You don't remember the place, Lilian, but I do. Only three bells in the house, a duck-pond under the drawing-room windows, and not a scrap of lawn or yard of gravel-walk; and the distance, and the passage, and the murders!"

"Oh, mamma, you are talking like Aunt Jane!" said Lilian. "Remember, all that was a hundred years ago. Mr. Desmond has often talked to us about his place, and I remember his mentioning draining and bell-hanging among the many improvements he has made in it. What remains to be done will be a delightful occupation for Alice."

"And the child?" grumbled Mrs. Clinton. "Fancy Alice a step-mother!"

"One little girl is not a very heavy charge," Lilian replied; "and she will be a pleasing one to Alice, who is very fond of her. Besides,

mamma, have you no sympathy for him? It is quite impossible not to feel for him, I think. There is nothing so melancholy to see as a young man loaded with responsibilities and domestic cares, and bearing them alone—with a little daughter, too! Think of the lonely child and more lonely father."

Lilian's own position made her feel for the parallel one of Desmond. Besides, was he not Wilfred's friend? In the earnestness of her appeal, and the vivid picturing of a situation so like her own, her strongest feelings were roused, and the eloquence of tears came to add force to her words.

Mrs. Clinton's resolve was shaken to its foundations. Lilian's wishes must not be opposed—she might fall back into the nervous depressed state from which she had just recovered. She had evidently taken this matter deeply to heart, and not on Alice's account alone. Mrs. Clinton remembered, too, that Desmond was Wilfred's friend, that Wilfred was sure to wish for his marriage with Alice that, therefore, Lilian's anxiety to bring it

about was a feeling less to be wondered at than respected ; also that Alice had not, last season, permitted the attentions of any one of her more suitable admirers, that this season was to be a blank, and that, after all, the Irishman was not so bad.

But Mrs. Clinton could not relent without great reluctance. She had so completely determined that Alice should never marry Mr. Desmond—she had felt so sure that her determination was thoroughly expedient, and therefore, of course, perfectly just and right—that now she was sorely perplexed at finding it opposed in a quarter from which she had reckoned on support.

“ Don’t distress yourself, my dear,” she said, “ if you really do wish for this event, well—I will think about it. But, indeed, it is a wretched marriage.”

“ The most brilliant one you could wish for, mother, might be far more wretched in truth.”

“ Oh, I dare say she will be very happy with that man. Your poor dear father was always fond of him, you know ; but when I call it a

wretched marriage, I don't mean that she will be unhappy exactly, but thrown away, altogether."

"But if she never marries at all, shall you be satisfied? for, believe me, that is the alternative."

"That's all romance and nonsense, Lilian; but still, if any one would act upon it, Alice would. I assure you, Lilian, I think I should prefer her never marrying."

This was Mrs. Clinton's "romance and nonsense," as Lilian well knew. It meant nothing but a lingering unwillingness to yield. She would yield ultimately, of this Lilian had no doubt; but she thought it wiser not to press the point at present. "Well, mamma," she said, "I won't say any more about it now, only telling you that I have no greater wish on earth than that you should change your resolution about Alice. It is the only thing I have set my heart upon; and you know, my dear mother," she continued, in a faltering voice, "you know, that almost the last time you spoke with my husband, it was on this subject, and his wish was as mine."

Mrs. Clinton was quite unused to hear such serious words from Lilian, enforced by such earnestness of tone and manner, and such an expression of anxious entreaty in her now shadowed and altered countenance. This last appeal broke down the remaining fortress of her resolve, and tenderly embracing her elder child, she promised happiness for the younger. "She would make the sacrifice," she said, "for Lilian's sake, and for the sake of the memory of him who was gone;" and then mother and daughter indulged in a flood of tears together —the former weeping over the fall of her ambitious projects for Alice, and the latter bitterly regretting the dark ages of her life; all her former folly and selfishness now rising before her, borne in upon her mind by the surging tide of memory, now set flowing afresh by the thought of this one wish of her dead husband's—one slight, scarcely formed wish—which was now to be fulfilled, while for his living wishes she had never cared.

Oh! there is no such suffering in this world of pain as the agony we feel when the burning

breath of the past overtakes us, like the blast of the simoom, as we traverse some fair oasis on our journey across the wilderness of life; when the recollection of sins against those whom death has withdrawn from the reparation we would now die to offer—of cruel words never to be retracted, and wrongs never to be repaired, though expiated with tears of blood—sweeps over our spirit like the wings of the avenging angel, or the deadly breeze of the desert. At such moments we can but prostrate ourselves beneath the submerging chastisement, and with faces in the dust, implore for pardon and peace! Then will the bitter hour pass away; and the subdued regret which will not and must not leave us, till at the gates of heaven we lay down the burden of life, will help to urge us onward and upward to our desired goal.

Alice's mother and sister agreed that nothing should yet be said to her about the change in her prospects which had taken place. Mrs. Clinton had a lingering hope that Desmond might not again cross her path; and Lilian feared to raise in her sister's mind hopes whose

accomplishment might possibly never take place, for she could not be positive that Desmond himself was unchanged, or that circumstances would admit of another meeting between the parted lovers. He might be at that moment preparing for an instant return to Ireland. Who could say that the cruel sentence had not been repealed too late ?

Alice meanwhile, unconscious of all that had taken place, resigned herself anew to her lonely life, and applying herself steadfastly to the hard duty of cheerful submission to a renewal of suffering, she succeeded in resuming her accustomed calm demeanour, in spite of the turmoil of excitement within, which could not subside at once.

But Mrs. Clinton discovered a trace of nervousness in her manner, and saw her increased paleness apparent the next morning after a sleepless night.

“ My dear Alice !” she said to her during breakfast, “ you are looking as ill as possible. Are you not well ?”

“ Only a headache, mamma,” said Alice.

“ Well, my dear,” Mrs. Clinton replied, “ I won’t prescribe Barbara’s remedy of putting horseradish on your eyes. We will take a walk this morning in Kensington Gardens; exercise will do you good. Will you come too, Lilian ?”

But Lilian, not being fond of walking, declined, much to Mrs. Clinton’s disappointment, who always found some little difficulty in sustaining a *tête-à-tête* conversation with her second daughter. But she was disposed for the walk herself; and thinking it would be good for Alice, she did not relinquish her intention, and in due time they set out.

What propitious fate was it that caused Mr. Desmond to traverse the Gardens at the very time they arrived there? Where he came from, whither he was going, are matters of no importance; at least both were forgotten when his keen sight recognised at a considerable distance the form of her who was never distant from his thoughts.

She was advancing towards him—in a few minutes they would meet. With his soul, as it were, springing to unite with hers, he

slackened his pace, bewildered, confused, dreading the impending pang, the anguish of such a meeting. For she was with his enemy—her mother—and they might scarcely meet as friends, much less as lovers: they, whose souls had never parted!

She, meanwhile, had recognised him. Mrs Clinton felt the sudden trembling of the arm which rested within her own, looked anxiously forward, and saw that circumstances had combined to conquer her last hope, and that Lilian's wish must be fulfilled. She was little prepared for this. Who could have dreamt of meeting him not twenty-four hours after she rashly promised to recal his sentence of exile! But Alice trembled more and more, and Desmond drew nearer. The time was come, and Mrs. Clinton must speak.

“Alice, I have no objection to Mr. Desmond's joining us, if he likes.”

This was all she had time to say. What it meant, whither it would lead, Alice knew not. At that moment she could feel nothing, understand nothing, but that he was there, that

her hand was in his once more, though but for a moment. Even the strong man's nerves were shaken at such a meeting. His cheek was pale as Alice's, and he could not speak.

Mrs. Clinton's presence of mind did not fail her; why should it? In her most graceful manner, and sweetest voice, she said:

“Are you in a hurry, Mr. Desmond? or will you join our walk?”

He felt as in a dream. What could have produced this change? He tried to answer, but no words would come. Silently he turned, and they walked on together. He had not presence of mind to offer his arm to either of his companions.

Mrs. Clinton saw plainly that he was unchanged, and resigned herself to the event, determining to be good-humoured, as it could not be helped. Accordingly she said to Desmond:

“Have you been long in London? do you intend to remain?”

Recovering a little, he replied:

“I have only been here two days. I came

on business, and intend returning to-morrow. How is Lady Rossendale?"

"As well as we could hope," was the reply; "her strength and spirits are returning rapidly. We are now on our way to the Isle of Wight. She was ordered to pass the summer near the sea. Were you ever at the Isle of Wight, Mr. Desmond?"

"Yes—no—I forgot."

How could he listen to her common-places with Alice by his side? and why did she talk to him in that strangely cordial manner? She had never addressed him so before since her husband's death. Had she resolved to forgive and forget the past, and receive again as a friend the old acquaintance who, she thought, had for a moment forgotten himself, but had now repented, and might be restored to favour? Or had she, indeed, herself repented of her cruel, almost insulting rejection of his suit? He must know what it meant; he could not live under this suspense; he could not talk platitudes to her, not knowing whether she meant again to insult his most earnest and

sacred feelings, or to give him a ray of such hope as he feared to dream of. His position was intolerable. Always straightforward and fearless — impulsive withal, like every Irishman, and burning to know his fate, he said :

“ Mrs. Clinton, this is too much for me. I cannot talk in this way at such a moment. I cannot walk on quietly with you, remembering how we parted. I am the same in every feeling as at that moment. If you are unchanged, say so, and let me go.”

He dared not look at Alice ; he turned his back to her, and stood with his eyes fixed on her mother’s face. It did not darken into its well-known frown.

“ Let us walk on, Mr. Desmond,” she replied. “ We look as if we were going to fight, which is by no means the case. Compose yourself, and give your arm to Alice, whom you do not appear to see. Circumstances have occurred to change the resolution I expressed to you when we last met. Since your wishes are unaltered, and you take for granted that there is no change in Alice, I may

think of retracting my resolve never to consent to your union."

The revulsion of feeling which these unexpected words created in Alice's heart was almost more than she could bear ; but to Desmond the shock of joy had given strength, and for an instant he had the happiness of sustaining the drooping form of Alice, now his for ever. Neither could utter a word. Alice strove to falter her thanks ; but Desmond felt not that he owed gratitude to any, but the God who had reunited them. Yet Mrs. Clinton's tardy justice had expiated the past ; and as he silently grasped her hand, she might have read her full forgiveness in his eyes ; but it never occurred to her that he had anything to forgive.

Mrs. Clinton had a great talent (when she chose to exercise it) for setting people at their ease. She exercised it now, and talked freely and cordially to Desmond on all kinds of subjects : inquiring after his child, and his home, and telling him her own past and future movements—ingeniously drawing Alice into the conversation, extricating her by degrees from

her bewilderment ; and, as she afterwards expressed it, in describing the scene to Lilian, " making everybody comfortable." They all three walked home together.

" You may come this afternoon," said Mrs. Clinton, gaily, as they parted at the door. " Lilian and I are going out to drive. You may come and sit with Alice."

" Well, my dear, I hope you will be happy," said Mrs. Clinton to her daughter, as they went up-stairs. " I have sacrificed all my hopes and wishes to yours, you see."

" And you will never repent of it, my dear mother," said Alice. " What can I do to make you feel my gratitude ?"

" Let me see you as happy ten years hence as you are now, and I shall try to be satisfied. But your gratitude should be given to Lilian, and to the memory of poor Rossendale ; he took your part long ago, Alice, and Lilian very naturally set her heart on the fulfilment of his wish. I only trust it may turn out well," added Mrs. Clinton, with a portentous sigh. " Now go and lie down, my dear, till he comes

this afternoon. I must bring you some eau-de-Cologne and water."

Alice swallowed the draught, which this time was not meant for Nepenthe, and then lay in a dream of bliss, unconscious of the passing moments, of all things and feelings, save thankfulness and joy, until she was aroused to come down and meet him again.

CHAPTER XIII.

I cannot hide that some have striven,
Achieving calm, to whom was given
The joy that mixes man with heaven.

TENNYSON.

AND now how rapidly flew by the winged hours of Alice's life! The freed prisoner, the returned exile, knows no such happiness. How changed in a moment was the whole landscape of her future! so lately dark, monotonous, cold, a barren earth and a clouded lowering sky, though well she knew the sun which it concealed. Now all was lovely as a dream of paradise, yet real as the ground she trod. Now the happy valley of her remaining life lay before her, green and fertile, and fair with fruitful

fields, smooth pastures, and leaping streams, all glowing beneath the cloudless smile of Heaven, all bright with hope and love, and rich with promise.

She had learnt to be thankful in adversity, to bless the hand that laid low her earthly hopes, by faith to "see the end and know the good," when all around and before her seemed dark ; and now in her prosperity, her faith rose higher, her love grew stronger, her hope more heavenly. The human love, in whose atmosphere she lived, was to her the reflection of the divine. She could not "worship the creature more than the Creator," for she saw that all she loved in Desmond was the Creator's direct gift and work; and to Him she looked, and Him she worshipped, the more earnestly and lovingly for that she saw so much of His in the creature He had given to be her life's companion.

And Maurice's spirit was once more lighted up with hope and beauty, once more the long dormant poetry of his nature was aroused to life, though it had never wholly slept since first

Alice's hand had called it from the depths of his unexamined character. In his solitary labours at home, in the dry, daily business of his life, as in the deep sorrow of his blighted love, he still felt at times a presence as of a consoling angel, lingering with folded pinions in the heart to which earthly happiness had been refused. The idea of the beautiful had been awakened in his soul, never to leave him. Through the cold facts around him he could look onward and upward to the truths they concealed. While living, working, acting in the real he carried gleams of the ideal in his heart, and toiled the harder at all his life's task-work, for that he toiled with music in his spirit, and was lighted at his work by a ray from beyond his sphere of labour.

Yet at times the music would sink to a low minor, the ray would fade to an uncertain gleam ; for in his loneliness he pined for her whose gentle touch had so attuned his nature, whose influence was still with him, whose sweet companionship through life had been his dream; and as time passed by and brought no hope,

his love but grew and strengthened as it sunk deeper and deeper into the most sacred recesses of his soul, fertilising, strengthening, elevating his nature, and not like lower loves in lower characters desolating the heart that harboured it, and enervating the moral being.

But now his long discipline was ended ; his and Alice's. Not often does life instead of death free us from our sorrows ; but so it was with them. Their happiness had come at last.

Two days after that on which they received such unexpected joy, they were again parted, but only for a short time. Maurice returned to Ireland, in order to arrange for a short absence from home and to fetch his child, with whom he soon rejoined Alice at the Isle of Wight, installing himself in a cottage near that of Lilian and Mrs. Clinton.

Very happily the summer hours passed on. Lilian saw her sister happy, her child daily improving in health and beauty. Mrs. Clinton grew fond of Maurice at last, as did all who really knew him ; and of his deep felicity and Alice's I have already said enough. The little

Lina was as a sunbeam in both houses, and with the half-maternal instinct so often early developed in little girls, she adored Lilian's infant, calling it her little cousin, by its mother's suggestion.

Wilfred's presence would have made their joy quite perfect ; but in all earthly joys there is something wanting, and he did not come. He would not leave his flock. Lilian wrote, urging him to engage a curate for a short time, and come and join them, but he always declined. He often wrote, however, both to his cousins and to Desmond. Most warmly he congratulated the latter on his approaching marriage, and gave his fullest sympathy to the happy lovers ; but his presence was not to be had. Harry Lynne, however, came to visit his aunt and cousins for a few days. He could not now hold long conversations with his friend Alice, but he found an opportunity of telling her that he had thought long and deeply over some of their past conversations, that, upon serious reflection he had resolved against entering the Church, and that after rather a stormy

argument with his father, he had obtained leave to "go his own way and disappoint his parents if he pleased."

"He was very angry with me," Harry said; "but for once I felt sure I was in the right, and I resisted him as respectfully as I could. He is rather angry with you, Alice, for he knows very well which way your influence went."

"Don't attribute it to my influence, Harry," she replied. "It was the influence of truth, I hope, that made you decline an office for which you do not think yourself fitted."

"My conscience was not so wide awake, I fear, until you stirred it up, Alice. It has been rather troublesome ever since; but I don't quarrel with that, nor with anything, now that I am free to choose my own career. My father thinks I must have become very wicked, because I have determined not to enter the Church, but he is quite mistaken. I'm by no means good, I know, but I was a great deal worse when I was less unwilling to embrace the life of a clergyman."

“ I can quite believe it,” said Alice. “ Conscientious feelings may increase your unwillingness, but indifference on such a subject would show a state of mind which I hope may never be yours, Harry. And what is this career to be, which you were so anxious to choose ?”

“ Oh ! nothing very wonderful. I mean to get into Parliament. Lord Leventon, Fred’s father-in-law, is kind enough to approve of me, I think, and he wants me to stand for R——, his own borough, when it becomes vacant, which it is sure to do, for the present member is going to resign—he told Lord Leventon so.”

“ I congratulate you,” said Alice. “ I hope you will be returned, Harry.”

“ Oh, that is certain ; Lord Leventon can return any one for R——.”

“ I am sorry to hear it. I would rather R—— returned you of its own accord.”

“ Oh ! nonsense, Alice, you can’t know anything about election matters. I mean to be a model member ; you’ll see ! No, you’ll see nothing, for you will be buried in Ireland, I

suppose, all the year round. How on earth did you make Aunt Florence agree to it, Alice!"

Alice smiled.

"Mamma is as kind as possible," she said, "and Lilian kinder still. I hope to have many visits from them—and from you, too, Harry, when I am buried, as you call it."

"Thank you! Your tenants won't shoot me, I hope, if I come some day? I don't want to be buried with you in earnest, Alice."

They did not talk much longer, for they were interrupted by the rest of the party; but Alice, in the midst of her own happiness, found time to rejoice at the alteration in her cousin's fate.

August came, and with it the usual crowds of fashionable visitors, swarming over the island. Yachts, never anywhere but "at and about the station," became scenes of social dinner-parties, and moonlight conversations. Vessels that could well have braved the storms of the Atlantic, awoke from their ten months' sleep to circumnavigate the island, and spread their snowy sails rather to the sun than to the breeze.

Two or three intrepid amateur tars, proud of the experience gained by one month's study of the science of navigation and by the diligent wearing of a glazed hat and blue jacket, sailed for the Mediterranean, their "own masters" in more senses than one, to the terror of their friends. Frequent regattas rejoiced the eyes of the true and pseudo-islanders, who gazed with open mouths and outstretched telescopes, or suffered martyrdom in a steamer to watch the races, in which a mysterious system prevails which totally prevents any spectator from appreciating the sport, as the yacht which comes in first is seldom the one that wins.

The royal standard floated from the tower at Osborne, and the shores of Cowes swarmed with anomalous human sea-monsters, ladies with wild hats, and infants in the garb of British sailors. That safe, delightful, charming Pacific Ocean, the Solent Sea, was gay with sails and flags (ensigns or burgees, I believe I ought to say) and alive with boats of every sort, even those so execrated by yachtsmen, the "odious steam-boats."

And for these last I must put in a word, although I own, in a tale like this, such a digression is out of place. It is the custom to rail at steamers, as being unpicturesque, ungraceful: detestable in every way, except, indeed, when we wish to cross the sea. But I contend that there is beauty and poetry in a steam-vessel, beauty in its long grey pennon of curling smoke, stretching with softening tints to the far horizon, and defining the waves by the play of its reflection; beauty especially at night, in its fiery eyes and coronet of leaping sparks and springing tongues of flame, manifestations of the fire within that is its heart and life; poetry in its steadfast will, its self-contained principle of motion, its scorn of the winds and tides, against which, like the weird vessel of the "Ancient Mariner," "it steadies with upright keel;" poetry in its great, throbbing, iron heart, which never plays it false, as long as it beats at all.

To conclude the subject, that which to man is so good and useful, must have true beauty and true poetry in a higher degree than a thing whose uses and whose powers are inferior.

Many will contest this proposition, but I shall hold it still.

The island was now becoming full of charms and attractions to Mrs. Clinton. It would have been the same to Lilian, but her attraction was elsewhere. Although she did not say so, even to herself, she was weary of Wilfred's absence, and began to pine for the home where almost daily he came to gladden her. Her health being completely restored, she would remain no longer. Alice's wedding was to take place on the 15th of August, at the parish church of Norneley, and Lilian longed to get home, to "make preparations," as she said, although it would be hard to say in what these preparations were to consist. It was arranged that Alice and her husband should go for a few days to The Hazels, before proceeding to Ireland, which Mrs. Clinton called their place of exile.

The 8th of August saw them all re-established at Norneley, except Desmond, who had returned home with his child, to superintend a few alterations and improvements which his house required, to prepare it for the reception

of its Châtelaine. He was to join the party at Norneley two days before the wedding.

Mrs. Clinton was determined, as she said, "that if the marriage took place at all, it should not seem as if we were all ashamed of it, whatever we might feel," and accordingly she persuaded Lilian to invite various guests for the occasion. Lord Leventon and Lady Theresa Maraford, that "old friend of the family," Major Burton, Mr. and Mrs. Lynne, Barbara and Harry were all invited, and all came. Fred and his wife were in their Ionian island, and therefore not to be had.

Mrs. Clinton was so happy at having "a little society" again, that even Alice's "wretched marriage" came in for some of the *couleur de rose*, which her fancy had spread over everything. Mrs. Lynne was in ecstacies, Barbara placid, Harry rather preoccupied, and always talking politics with Lord Leventon, Lilian happy, for Wilfred spent all his evenings under her roof, and Mr. Lynne even was less severe than usual.

The happy day arrived, a cloudless summer

morning, in spite of all Barbara's prophecies that the weather would certainly change. That excellent young lady was not again called on to perform the office of bridesmaid, which was given to six little girls from the village school, all well known to Alice and to Mrs. Lester, whom I should have mentioned before as being of the party. Mrs. Clinton thought this arrangement "most absurd," but yielded, as it was Wilfred's suggestion; and she acknowledged afterwards that they did look rather nice with their smooth, fair heads and fresh white calico frocks. Alice's own dress caused her mother much serious vexation. Mrs. Clinton had intended that it should be similar to what Lilian wore at her marriage, but Alice resolutely set her face against Brussels flounces.

"Give what they would cost, dear mamma," she said, "as my parting gift to the poor near The Hazels, and let me follow my fancy. I promise you I won't make a figure of myself."

Lilian and Wilfred pleaded for the indulgence of Alice's wish, and Mrs. Clinton made this last concession. The bride was accordingly

attired in Limerick lace, and Mrs. Clinton did not consider that she had kept her promise, although Mrs. Lynne repeatedly declared that nothing could look nicer than dear Alice did.

But why should I enter into particulars, or minutely describe the attendant circumstances of an event so fraught with happiness as the union of these two lovers? We will not linger to count the spangles upon the purple drapery of their rich gladness, but rather sympathise in their overflowing gratitude, the deep thankfulness of their hearts to God, who to one spirit had given the help-meet it needed in its active toil, and had taken from the other the burden it had borne so long, the weight of loneliness, so crushing to woman's nature, and yet by Alice not borne in vain, since it had taught her patience, love, and trust.

There was but one soft cloud on her heaven and Maurice's that day, one floating shadow, if shadow I may call it, when it is cast by an angel's wing—the memory of little Kate. And yet they felt her gentle spirit near them as they stood before the altar, and they could not call

her their lost child, for they knew well that they were journeying towards her, that, hand in hand, they were striving together to reach her home and theirs.

And thus was solved the enigma of Alice's life. Her place, her duties were at last appointed to her. Patience gave place to action ; she was no more to stand and wait.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Clinton to her sister, late that evening. "Ah! it's all over now. Poor Alice ! it is not what I could have wished ; but after all, she will be happy in her own way."

"And we all know Maurice so well," said Mrs. Lynne, "that is a great comfort. And this time of year, we may hope they will have a good passage. I'm really delighted, Florence, to see our dear Alice so happily settled : for as you say, she will be happy her own way, and I suppose we can't expect anything more than that, can we?"

"Well, we must be content with it," replied Mrs. Clinton. "All I wish now is to see my poor Lilian equally happy. You know, Jane, what I mean."

“ Perfectly, my dear Florence, and with all my heart I wish it too ; and I am quite certain of Wilfred—although I never said a word to him about it, nor will I, until he speaks to me—I am perfectly convinced he is still attached to her. Barbara thinks so too.”

“ Now, my dear Jane, don’t let Barbara spoil all by talking to Wilfred or Lilian about it.”

“ Florence !” replied Mrs. Lynne with indignant rapidity. “ Barbara never spoilt anything in her life. It would be a very good thing for you or me, or any one I know, to have Barbara’s judgment and sense. She is a perfect rock of sense.”

“ A perfect rock, I know,” said Mrs. Clinton, with something between a smile and a sneer ; “ but in a case like this, it is tact more than sense which we require.”

“ Barbara will say and do whatever is right,” persisted Mrs. Lynne. “ She has sense, and tact, and everything else.”

Mrs. Clinton rather impatiently closed the colloquy, and bidding her sister good-night, went to bed to dream of another wedding, while Mrs. Lynne’s visions of the night were haunted

by the insulted form of Barbara, mingled with scenes of peril by land and sea, in which Alice and her husband stood on the verge of destruction; while afar off, in an island of bliss, was seen the beatific vision of dear Fred and Lady Florella, playing the Post Horn Galop arranged as a duet, on the piano, under an orange-tree.

But I must not linger among Mrs. Lynne's dreams. My task is nearly done; the story of Alice's probation is told. Unwilling as I am to leave her, unwilling too, to lose sight of the earnest-hearted, true, and faithful Desmond, yet I will not follow them to their island-home. Mine is a tale of spiritual strife, of mental struggles. They are at peace as far as this lower life can be peace: and I leave them.

The next marriage that occurred between parties mentioned in these pages, was not that of Lilian and Wilfred, but of Mrs. Lester and Sir Aubrey Howard. It was, as Mrs. Lynne said at the time, "a thing nobody ever could have dreamt of;" but such things will happen, among the strange combinations produced by passing circumstances in this world of change.

Thus was it brought about. In the summer after Alice's marriage, Sir Aubrey returned to London from his long and extended travels, altered in many things ; altered in his love for Alice, which had died a natural death during the excitement of his journeyings in savage lands ; altered, too, in his tastes, which had become less social during his long intercourse with nature in scenes where she forced herself by her wild magnificence or irresistible beauty on his attention and into his heart. He had learnt many lessons of true wisdom among his primitive brothers of the forests, or of the coral islands of the South ; and he came back to the world, not to resume its thraldom, but freer in spirit for the truths which he had learnt from nature.

He might, however, have soon forgotten all, but for the chance, if chance it was, that came to forbid his return to his former butterfly existence. One day, as he was driving his cab through Bond Street, his horse took fright, ran away, and notwithstanding all Sir Aubrey's presence of mind and efforts to guide the terrified animal, it rushed between a brewer's dray

and a lamp-post, shattering the vehicle, and flinging Sir Aubrey upon the pavement with terrific force. The groom, comparatively un-hurt, directed the removal of what he thought to be the mangled corpse of his master; and it was about to be consigned to a cab, when Mrs. Lester, who had been driving by and had witnessed the accident, left her carriage, and insisted on placing it at the service of the injured gentleman.

She stood among the crowd, courageous in her humanity, and did not turn sickening away from the blood-stained form of Sir Aubrey, as her footman lifted it in his arms to place it in the carriage. She had seen worse sights among the poor, and in the accident ward of hospitals. With her own handkerchief she wiped the blood from his face, and disclosed the ghastly cut, which almost divided his forehead and cheek. With her own hands she bound it up, with the tender skilfulness of a woman's surgery, and then walked home alone, leaving her servant and his to convey him to his rooms.

It was months before he left them, and then he went forth an altered man indeed—bent as if with age—lame, for, in spite of human skill, the compound fracture of his right leg had not healed without severe contraction of the muscles, his face scarred, and his dark hair streaked with silver, the result of weeks of agony. Such was the once gay and handsome Sir Aubrey Howard when he once more reappeared among men. He had been tenderly cared for by his mother and a young sister during his fearful sufferings; and in their society—in his renewed dependence on a mother's love and support—he became once more a child—once more obedient, believing, truth-loving, as in the opening years of his life, with the addition of the deep, manly contrition and repentance for which childhood has no cause.

He took the first opportunity of forming an acquaintance with her who had rendered him the first assistance, and perhaps saved his life at the moment of his greatest peril, and I have said how it ended. They are happy now. His health is quite restored, and his form has recov-

vered its uprightness: yet he is still lame, and the scar on his face will never disappear; but this disfigurement is more than atoned for by the true refinement now added to his former beauty, and the deeper thoughtfulness of his dark eyes.

Their marriage took place in the same week as that of the R—— election, which ended in Harry's return for the borough, without opposition. He is now a clever and useful M.P., and promises well as a future statesman. He is claimed by very opposite parties, for he gives his vote in favour of all measures which he considers good and just, regardless of the side of the House from which they emanate; but as yet no political class-name has been permanently fastened upon him, nor, I trust, ever will be. His father has grown proud of him again, his sister does not despise him, and his mother thinks him only second to Fred.

But before I close the scene—before I bid farewell to Norneley and its inmates, to the fair young widow at the Manor, and her loved kinsman at the rectory—I must record one more event, and then my tale is told.

CHAPTER XIV.

Then breaking into tears, "Dear God," she said, "and
must we see

All blissful things depart from us, or ere we go to *Thee*?
We cannot guess Thee in the wood, or hear Thee in the
wind?

Our cedars must fall round us, ere we see the Light
behind?

Ay! sooth, we feel too strong in weal to need Thee on
that road;

But woe being come, the soul is dumb, that crieth not
on *God*!"

MRS. BROWNING.

FIVE years have passed since Alice's marriage. She and her husband are in their seaside home. Lina is a tall and graceful girl, entering her fifteenth year, devoted to her gentle step-mother, and almost equally so to little Ulick, her curly-headed brother now three years

old. Alice Desmond has developed into beauty since her happiness began. Lilian herself is not more graceful, and perhaps scarcely more admired. *She*, indeed, is changed—grown thin and pale; and though her eyes are bright and soft as ever, there is an anxiety in their brightness, and in their softness a sad expression, not there when we saw them last.

It was a glorious summer evening. The fields were golden green in the warm sunset light, and the river ran crimson towards the grey east, as though bearing to it its share of the sun's last gift of colour to the clouds. The sky was flecked to the zenith with crimson and rose, and a light breeze played among the floating cloudlets, whose endless change of form and colour it was a rich delight to watch.

But Lilian sat on the stone steps of the terrace, her head drooping, her eyes upon the ground, while beside her stood her child, a tiny creature, not short for his six summers, but so slight and frail, that it would seem as though a gust of wind could raise him from the earth.

He leaned upon the stone balusters, his small head resting on his little thin white hand, the breeze playing in his long flaxen hair, and raising it from his high forehead and grave, sad face, unchildlike in all but its look of innocence and purity. The sunset gleam gave to his cheeks a colour which they never otherwise possessed ; and his dark hazel eyes looked through their fringing lashes down upon the river, to whose distant voice the child was intently listening.

A chill breath of wind from the east swept by. Lilian felt it, and rising, said :

“ Canice, my child, we must come in. You will catch cold in this evening air.”

The boy turned with a sigh from the beauty on which his young heart had been feeding, and followed his mother through the open window into the room: It seemed very dark after the radiant twilight without. Lilian sat down, taking her child upon her knee. She did not speak to him, but he felt her tears falling fast among the tangles of his hair, and, with a child’s quick sympathy, he said :

“ I am very sorry for you, mamma.”

Lilian kissed him passionately, and wept still more. Little Canice was not frightened, as many children would have been. Accustomed to being his mother’s sole companion, her varying moods could not startle him. It was her wont to talk to him as if she had forgotten his age, to allow her feelings to find expression in his presence sometimes as if she were alone, sometimes as if his sympathy could avail her, or his childish caresses give the consolation she needed. Lilian could not be wholly self-contained ; and when this sensitive child was her sole companion, she threw herself upon his sympathy, and the blind, but loving instinct of the child never failed in its response.

“ Tell me what is the matter, mamma,” he said, stroking her hair. “ Aunt Alice went away last week, but she will pay us another visit, perhaps. You are not crying for her ? Is it because Cousin Wilfred is ill, mamma ?”

“ My child,” sobbed Lilian, “ my child, he is dying ! Wilfred, our own Wilfred, is going to

leave us, Canice ; and I shall have no one on earth but you !”

The poor little boy cried bitterly — the thought of losing Wilfred was no light sorrow to his morbidly tender heart ; but the door opened abruptly, and Mrs. Forrest appeared. She was a privileged servant now, having been with Lilian through all her trials, and knowing her well, as servants quickly learn to do. She was a good and faithful woman ; and if she scolded her mistress sometimes, it was truthful love that prompted her rebukes, and made her forget for a moment their relative positions. Lilian never resisted her. Difference of class cannot interfere with the universal law that the stronger spirit should rule the weaker.

“ My lady, it is his lordship’s bed-time,” she said, firmly. “ Nurse is waiting for you, my lord.”

“ Go, my darling,” said Lilian. “ Don’t cry, Canice, I will come and see you before you sleep. Good-night, my child.”

Mrs. Forrest opened the door, but did not follow him. Closing it determinately, she said :

“ My lady, you shouldn’t excite that poor little child as you do. Why should he know about Mr. Lynne ? That is quite enough to keep him awake ; and he hasn’t strength for sleepless nights, my lady.”

“ I believe I was selfish, Forrest,” said Lilian. “ He is stronger to-day, don’t you think ?”

“ He is not ill, my lady ; and I trust he will thrive after a time. He is always worse in summer. But your ladyship should remember that care for his body will not do much good if his mind is to be disturbed. It is too active and too sensitive already. If he is stronger to-day, my lady, he won’t be so to-morrow unless he has a good night’s rest, poor child !”

“ Well, leave me now, Forrest,” Lilian replied, but not impatiently. “ I have much to distress me just now. I should be sorry, indeed, that he should share my troubles.”

Mrs. Forrest retired ; but when Lilian went up-stairs a few minutes after, to bid her child a last good-night, she found the faithful woman

sitting by his bed ready to protect him from his mother's emotions, and his own. In such a presence she could only kiss him quietly, leave him to his slumbers, and then return to her solitary sitting-room.

“To-morrow,” she thought to herself, “to-morrow I will go to him ; and while he lives, I will not leave him. Oh, Wilfred ! Wilfred ! He loved me once, and I repulsed him ; and now—and now my whole soul is his, and I can but watch him as he dies, and never hear a word of love from him again to make me bear with life without him !”

Bitter, indeed, were Lilian’s sufferings. First love is a fearful thing when it does not come in early youth, but takes possession of a heart which has already suffered, and of a nature which adversity has deepened into a capability for that which is intense and enduring ; a fearful thing when it grows out of the friendship of a life-time, when it has everything but hope to feed on, and when it carries with it such keen, remorseful sorrow as that which stung Lilian to the heart when she thought of Wilfred ; and to

her, life was made up of thoughts of him. And she had told the truth to her child—Wilfred was dying.

A month ago he had caught a malignant fever from a poor family in the village, whom he constantly visited. It assumed an inflammatory character; and though it speedily yielded to Dr. Browne's judicious treatment, the necessarily strong remedies left him so utterly reduced, that all skill could do failed to restore his strength; and as days passed on, fatal symptoms became too apparent. It needed not that his faithful friend and physician should tell him that he could not live. Wilfred knew it well, and saw that his work on earth was ended. Never, in his short life, could death have taken him unprepared; but now it approached him rapidly, yet with gentle steps, beautiful and placid. He was alone; his parents and sister were abroad, watching over the interests of what they called “the Protestant cause” in Italy—too distant to be sent for; his brothers were abroad, too. Of all his relatives, Lilian alone was near him. But what was their love to hers!

They err who say that hope is the essential food of love, without which it cannot exist. Lilian had long learnt that hers was hopeless, and yet it seemed to grow all the stronger for that it grew in vain. Wilfred's very kindness bid her despair. His true affection for her only grieved the spirit it should have soothed, for it was not the love she needed, the love he had once given, the love he could feel, had felt, and for her too, for her alone. She knew well that she had no human rival, but the knowledge brought her no comfort. She might win back his affections, had they but strayed to another object ; but she could not call his spirit down from the passionless sphere it moved in, to the stormy region of her own. She could not bring the star she worshipped to blend its cold, pure radiance with the earthly fire she offered up. It shone on, unconscious of its burning altar in her heart ; it shone, planet like, reflecting on the night of many lives the light of an unseen sun ; it shone lovingly down on many homes, most lovingly on hers, and yet to her its light was torture, its calm presence despair, although without it all were darkness.

Her mother knew as much as her own nature permitted her to know of Lilian's state; and she would often pity her, and rail at Wilfred for his coldness, appealing to Lilian's pride as a remedy for all she suffered. And thus Mrs. Clinton's presence was to Lilian but an increase of torment. To have her deep heart-wound so rudely handled, to hear of "pride conquering her weakness," when the love that was consuming her was itself her pride, and strength, and glory, these things she could not bear. And she was thankful now that her mother was far away, visiting Alice in Ireland —thankful that there was none to witness the writhings of her spirit under its approaching torture.

A few days more, and she would see Wilfred die.

The morrow came, and the summer sun was still low in the eastern sky when Lilian walked alone to the rectory, carrying a little basket of grapes which she had gathered for Wilfred. Early as it was, she found him up, reclining in his arm-chair near the open window of his little

drawing-room. His untasted breakfast stood on a table beside him ; his Bible lay open upon his knees, and a large white lily, freshly gathered, rested across the page.

“ You are early to-day, Lilian,” he said, as she entered. “ I am very glad you are come. How kind you are to me ! And these beautiful grapes ! thank you, dear Lilian. Such a gift is no small kindness to a sick man. They will do for my breakfast.”

His cheerful manner, contrasted with his pale, emaciated form, and weak voice, filled Lilian’s heart with anguish. She could not speak—could not even look at him ; she busied herself in arranging the grapes upon a plate for him.

“ Is it very fine out of doors ?” he said. “ And where is Canice ?”

“ He will come this afternoon,” she replied. “ It is a lovely day, indeed. Is this from your garden ?” she added, pointing to his lily.

“ Yes,” he replied. “ My flowers give me their companionship when I am not able for books ; and they are quite as suggestive, I

think. This lily—for instance, I can read of truth, and purity, and hope in every white petal and green leaf; and in its deep central heart I see the glowing light of love. Look into it, Lilian; look down, and see that golden hue, as if it still kept in its heart the sunbeams that visited it this morning."

The light of love! the light, but not the fire—the sunbeams, not the torch-flames.

Lilian took it, and almost shuddered at the cold contact of its stem; to her feverish fancy, the fair blossom spoke reproachfully. She looked from it to Wilfred's face, pale, sunken, yet how idealised by suffering! how elevated and purified was that countenance, always so high and pure! She laid down the flower, by which in this one instance the man, and not the woman, was symbolised; and as she laid it down, her hot tears fell upon its petals—an unwonted, withering dew.

"Be comforted," said Wilfred, his voice startling her like sudden music. "There is nothing to grieve for. Sit down here, Lilian, and let us talk quietly. I am able to talk to-day."

“ You are better ?” she said quickly ; “ you are better, Wilfred ?”

“ I feel much better,” he replied. “ It may be that I am to do yet more work for my Master in this lower sphere. My time may not be over, as I thought.”

“ Oh ! may God grant it !” cried Lilian, passionately, falling on her knees beside him. “ May He restore you, Wilfred !”

He laid his hand softly upon her head.

“ Not that prayer, Lilian,” he said. “ No prayer now for me, except ‘ Thy will be done.’ ”

“ I may not ask God to spare you ? I may not call upon Him in this trouble, and implore Him to avert it ?”

“ I have laid down all my wishes at His feet,” Wilfred replied. “ I repose upon His providence. He only knows what is best for us in this matter. I am silent before Him now—silent, save for the imperfect praise and thanksgiving, which I would continually offer up ; and you, dear Lilian, must be silent too, for my sake, or only pray that my submission may not fail ; that no hope or wish may arise within me contrary to my Father’s will.”

“But I must hope—I will hope, Wilfred, you will recover ; you are better, I know.”

“Let us not talk of this, dear Lilian. It brings thoughts into my heart which I would gladly keep away. The heaven which yesterday I thought so near, the trials and temptations into which I may be thrown back, the service which I may yet do here for the cause of truth, the indolent longing for rest, the fearful shrinking from more of this lower life, and yet the wish to serve God more and better before my labours end—all these conflicting thoughts arise when speculations about my future are suggested to me. Till God’s will is made plain, I must be still, admitting no disturbing influences.”

What right had she, thought Lilian, to come into his calm, holy presence ? But her passion could not disturb him. He was beyond its sphere. She would tame down her love, her grief, her fear ; stifle their expression, achieve, in outward seeming, a calm like his, sooner than leave him.

So she sat quietly beside him, silent for a moment or two, and then with child-like gentleness asked if she might stay with him for the

day, promising, with a smile more sorrowful than tears, that he should not find her a disturbing influence—that she would read to him, talk of what he liked, be silent if he wished it.

He thanked her affectionately, and bid her remain with him, if indeed she wished to do so, “if you do not tire of your sick brother,” he added.

She could not bear the word from his lips ; but the pang was not a new one.

Through the long summer morning they sat together. Wilfred soon grew exhausted, for he could not bear much conversation ; and then Lilian read to him, at his request, passages from Mrs. Browning’s “Drama of Exile,” a favourite poem of his ; after which she sat by him silently, hoping he would sleep, but he was soon aroused by the entrance of Dr. Browne.

Lilian had learnt to like the good physician, with all his roughnesses.

“Lady Rossendale here again ?” he said. “You are well taken care of, Lynne ! I am always glad to find her with you. Nothing like a woman’s care !”

“She has given me a very happy morning,”

said Wilfred, with a grateful glance at "his sister." "Now she must rest. Go out into the fresh air, dear Lilian, and rest yourself while the doctor stays. You must be tired, reading so much."

She went into his garden, and threw herself on the turf under an old cedar, in a fever of anxiety. What would the doctor say? Surely he was better, much better. No! he was not to die, no more than the passion that lay chained within her heart. He should not die, should not take from her the sweet anguish of his presence; sweet, compared to the despair of losing him.

She heard a quick, light footstep at her side; turned, and saw her child. He stood beside her, laden with flowers, a basket in his hand filled with wild blossoms from the river-side and the woods; his other arm sustained a heap of bright exotics from the conservatory, and roses from the garden. He was nearly hidden among glowing flowers; long wreaths of the frail but glorious *Ipomæa* hung round his neck, trailing to his feet. He seemed enclosed in an atmosphere of dazzling colour and rich fragrance.

"Nurse helped me to carry them," he said,

breathlessly. "Look, mamma ! What quantities ! They are all for Wilfred. But I shall lose some, if I don't carry them in !"

He looked like an embodied Hope ; the roses he carried reflected their colour on his cheeks. He came like a sunbeam to his mother's soul.

"Yes, take them in, Canice," she said. "He will like them very much."

The child bounded away across the sunny lawn, dazzling as some tropical bird. It pleased Lilian's fancy to think that she could send so gay and fair a sight into Wilfred's presence.

The doctor had finished his visit, and was now coming towards her. She advanced to meet him.

"Don't ask me," he replied, to the unspoken question in her face. "I cannot tell you about him. Go in, Lady Rossendale ; he wishes to see you now."

Without a word she entered, and returned trembling to Wilfred's side. Her boy sat at his feet, talking eagerly, and surrounded by flowers.

"Run into the garden, my boy," said Wilfred, as Lilian entered. "I like your flowers very much indeed. You shall come back and arrange them."

The child disappeared, and they were left together.

“Lilian, I was mistaken when I told you I was better. I wish I had never said those words, for I know you will grieve at my recalling them. I have not many days, perhaps not many hours, to live.”

Where was her hope now? But she was calm; she could not but be calm, under the light of his steadfast eyes. He went on:

“The doctor is a true friend, and does not hide my state from me. The false strength which deceived me this morning, is but a sign that the end is near. I should have known it before, but this illness always deceives the sufferer. Well, all doubt is over now, and peace remains!”

“Oh, Wilfred!” cried Lilian, for he had turned his looks away, and she could no more be still, “Oh, Wilfred! peace to you, I know. But what to me! oh, what to me, Wilfred!”

“Peace, too, in time,” he said. “You will grieve for your brother, but not bitterly, Lilian. I am going home before you; but you will follow, I trust, you and your child—the child whom you will rear for heaven.”

She scarcely heard him. She only heard the stormy voices of her own heart.

“Wilfred,” she said, “you cannot comfort me. There is no comfort for me—none. You know not what you are to me; you cannot know what you have been all these years to me! for I have loved you, Wilfred—I, whom you loved once, when I was not worthy of one thought of yours—I have lived for you, lived on the sight and memory of you for long years, Wilfred; and I love you still—shall love you always, when you are forgetting me in heaven! Do not talk of peace—there is no peace for me!”

She had sunk down at his feet, and sat there among the flowers her child had scattered, her face buried in her hands, her tears falling through her fingers.

Wilfred was deeply shocked. A faint flush rose to his pale pure brow, and weak as he was he could scarcely preserve his calmness, he pitied her so deeply! Less for her unrequited love (though deep in his heart lay the memory of what that pain could be), than for the untamed nature that rejected peace, and the passions that could thus rave when death was so near.

Again he laid his pale, cold hand upon her burning head.

“ Be still, dear Lilian,” he said. “ May God send you the peace, the consolation I cannot give. I thank you for your love to me. You have given me much happiness ; and no sister could have been dearer to a brother’s heart than you are to mine, Lilian. We were never meant to be more to one another. We must forget that dream. I wish it had not come to both of us.”

She did not seem to heed him, but crouched sobbing at his feet. Wilfred had not strength for this. The scene and his own deep pity exhausted him.

“ Lilian, I cannot bear to see you thus !” he said, faintly.

She rose, and shook away her tears ; but she could not look up, after having confessed so much.

Little Canice came to the relief of both. He glided through the open window to his mother’s side, and began collecting his flowers. His innocent presence tranquillized her, and Wilfred too revived as the excitement subsided.

“ Let us arrange the flowers now, Canice,” he said. “ Ask mamma to help you.”

And Lilian, moving as in a dream, fetched the tall white vases of opaque glass, and the large Amphora of brown earthenware, from Wilfred’s little hall, and began filling them with rainbow-coloured flowers, as the child handed them to her.

“ We’ll keep this vase for the wild ones,” he said. “ I like them best, and so does Wilfred. Here, mamma, the tall water-iris in the middle, now this foamy flower—meadow-sweet, is it not? —and here are my wild roses and the blue forget-me-nots, and the white convolvulus, Wilfred! Look at it! as beautiful as your lily, which mamma has crushed! Twist it round the vase outside; and here’s fern, and harebells, and—”

“ Canice, you will tire him,” said Lilian. “ Be still, my child.”

“ He does not tire me; but, Lilian, I must ask you to leave me now. I would be alone this evening. Come again to-morrow—will you not?”

“ Oh, Wilfred! let me stay—stay to be forgiven, Wilfred!”

The child looked up amazed.

“Forgiven! I have but love, and gratitude, and blessing to give you, dear Lilian; but I ask you as a favour to leave me now. Go home and rest; and God be with you, my beloved sister, and give you peace.”

She could not oppose his slightest wish. She turned to go, but could not trust herself with a word of parting—could not even say “Good-night.” But little Canice kissed his cousin, and lingered beside him when Lilian had left the room. Wilfred gently disengaged the little arms which had twined round his neck.

“Kneel down, my child,” he said. “Let me hear your evening prayer.”

The child reverently obeyed, surprised, yet never dreaming of questioning why this was to be. His little prayer ended, Wilfred, with both hands on the boy’s head, earnestly and solemnly blessed him, commanding him to the God who once, in a child-like form like his, commenced the work of Atonement. Then, with a last solemn kiss, he bid the child “Good-night.”

And Canice joined his mother with a strange, calm awe in his young face, which she did not see.

She was eagerly entreating Wilfred's old house-keeper to send for her instantly if her master should grow worse in the course of the night. She would come, she said, soon after daylight. The housekeeper promised, and the mother and child walked slowly and sadly to their home.

“A message from the rectory, my lady.”

At sunrise, the next day, these words were said to Lilian—by whom, she scarcely knew, she was so absorbed by their dreaded meaning. He was worse—dying, perhaps!

She was up and dressed—she had hardly been two hours in bed, having risen at the first gleam of daylight. In a few moments after receiving the message she was at Wilfred's side.

He lay struggling for breath, Dr. Browne supporting his head. The perspiration stood on his forehead, and his whole frame shook with agony as he drew his breath laboriously. But he tried to smile when he saw Lilian, and extended his hand to her, which she held convulsively, dumb with the silence of terror.

“He is getting easier,” said the doctor; “he suffers less than he did just now. My

dear Lynne, this is, I trust, the last pain you will have."

"Thank God!" murmured Wilfred.

And, by degrees, his anguish lessened, his breath came more easily, and he lay still, but almost lifeless from exhaustion.

"Come here, Lilian," he said, feebly.

The doctor had drawn her away from the bed, that the free air might reach the dying man.

She came and bent over him to catch his scarcely uttered words, which no ears but hers could hear.

"Take care of the poor—and God reward you, Lilian, for all your tenderness to me. You will be happier when—when all this is over—and we shall meet where—we can do so without pain to either."

He stopped, exhausted. She passed her arm under his head, and rested it upon her shoulder. She was so still and calm, that it lay there as if no heart was breaking under it.

"It is all well," he said; "all peace and joy. I could not have lived longer, Lilian. I was a sorrow to you. Think of me as your brother still, not very far off; and our Father bless and comfort you, Lilian."

“Amen,” she tried to say; and stooping over him, she kissed his forehead.

There was another pause. Life was failing fast. She could scarcely hear his slow breathings, and the hand she held in hers grew chill within her grasp.

He had received the Holy Communion before she came. Only his servants had joined him in the sacred rite. Lilian felt grieved at the thought that she had not been there—yet it would have been a privilege of which she felt herself unworthy—to share *his* last Communion. She was sufficiently blest in that his last words were uttered in her ear.

“Are you in pain, dear Wilfred?” she asked, as a momentary shadow crossed his features.

“Not much,” he whispered. “It is over now. No more pain.”

The light returned to his face; brighter and brighter it grew, as though with the reflection of some unseen glory.

“Life and immortality!” he murmured, the Heaven-light beaming from his eyes; and to Lilian’s ear his weak, low voice seemed like triumphant music as it spoke those words.

They were his last. She felt a trembling pressure from the hand she held, she saw a clearer radiance flash across his countenance, fade, and vanish, leaving only the solemn beauty of the forsaken clay.

He was gone.

A few moments of silent, breathless awe, of unuttered prayers, dumb appeals to the God of the departed, the God they felt so near them at that solemn moment, and then Dr. Browne led Lilian from the room—led her by the hand like a child, helpless, unresisting.

And now I have no more to tell. The pure spirit, pure as a spirit can be which indeed had been through life unspotted from the world, has entered into rest.

But *she* remains, to mourn her blighted love ; nay, rather, to raise it from the earth, to turn her soul towards the sunlight, now that its “pleasant plants” are fallen, which kept the sunbeams out.

She will be happy, though she does not think so now. She has her child—that sweet young life, so frail and yet so promising, depending

wholly upon her. And she has the poor—Wilfred's poor. And more than all, she has a new and blessed hope, sown in the freshly furrowed soil of her heart, soon to spring greenly upward, and gladden her with a joy such as she never found among the withered flowers of her former life.

I leave her then; and may all who read these pages—the happy and the sorrowful, the young votary of a thousand apparent hopes, the aged mourner who mutters through his tears that he has done with hope for ever—may all my friends, known and unknown—all my fellow-strugglers, for whom I wrote, come at last to the peace which she is seeking—the peace of God, which passeth all understanding !

THE END.

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